

FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

ALWAYS ON THE MOVE;
OR, THE LUCK OF MESSENGER 99.

BY *A SELF-MADE MAN*

AND OTHER STORIES



As the horses suddenly started ahead, there came a jerk. It caused the rope to part that held the case. Messenger 99 and his friend fell from their perch, the heavy packing case falling after them, and threatening to crush both boys.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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ALWAYS ON THE MOVE

OR, THE LUCK OF MESSENGER 99

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Messenger Ninety-Nine.

"Ninety-nine!"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed a bright-faced lad, whose name was Fred Hooper, springing from a bench which he had ornamented in common with nine other boys of varying ages and sizes, and approaching the counter behind which stood a dapper-looking man who had called him up.

"Ten little messengers sitting in a line; take one away and there are nine," softly chirruped Bennie Bennett, otherwise Messenger 23, who was sitting at the left of the space vacated by Messenger 99.

He was Messenger 99's chum. The operator handed Hooper a small slip of paper and the boy looked at the name and address that was filled in on it. Then he started for the door.

"Where are you bound, Fred?" asked Bennie as his friend passed him.

"No. — South street," replied Hooper.

"A nice foggy night for a tramp along the river," said Bennie. "I wish you luck."

Bennie's final sentence did not reach Fred's ears, as he was already on the other side of the door. It was a foggy night for fair. The mist had been sifting in from the ocean all afternoon, accompanied by a slight drizzle that had had a very depressing effect on the lower part of the city particularly, and had now reached way up in the Bronx.

Messenger 99 was employed in a lower Broadway office of the A. D. T. company, and when he stepped out into the foggy, clammy atmosphere he felt that his job had its share of drawbacks. He had a happy disposition, however, which made him a favorite with his companions, and was prepared to accept philosophically whatever came his way.

"It's all in the day's work," he thought, as he started down the nearest street that led to the East river.

It was 7 o'clock and the business houses along the west side of South street were usually dark and deserted at that hour. On the east side of the thoroughfare lay a long succession of piers occupied by vessels and the freight sheds of steamboat companies. Because the business establishments were closed up that isn't saying there was no life on South street after dark.

There was lots of it, for there were saloons and all-night restaurants of a cheap variety sprinkled here and there, and there were plenty of tenements up the side streets close by, where the longshoremen who worked on the docks lived. Some of the blocks, however, were deserted, and on such a night as this one the street had an unusually dead look. The loungers preferred the warmth of the saloons, the proprietors of which were doing a roaring trade in consequence, since the temptation to drink was much stronger within sight of the bar, and then the damp air made one chilly and called for something warming.

The messenger call had come over the telephone, and Messenger 99 expected to find No. — South street open, whether it was a warehouse, or office, or some other establishment. When Hooper struck the right block he didn't see a gleam of light issuing from the whole length of it, either on the ground floor or above, nor was there a pedestrian in sight. The fact didn't worry him.

He was bound for a certain number, and it was his place to go there. When he reached No. — South street he found it was a ship chandlery store. It was closed as tight as wax, however. He ascertained that fact beyond a doubt when he tried the door. There was a round hole in the shutter of the window provided for the policeman on that beat to look through. It afforded a view of the interior of the small counting-room with a dim light burning above the safe.

Messenger 99 peeped through it and he saw that the place appeared to be untenanted by an occupant. As he stood there a man muffled up to the ears in a heavy overcoat, with a slouch hat pulled well down over his eyes, disengaged himself from the shadow of the neighboring doorway and walked up to the boy.

Under his arm he carried an oblong package wrapped up in a newspaper. He must have worn rubbers for his feet made no sound on the pavement, and the first indication the boy had of his presence was when he tapped him on the arm.

Fred turned quickly and saw the glint of a pair of eyes looking at him.

"What do you want?" asked the boy.

"You are the messenger I telephoned for, I guess," said a deep voice.

"Did you telephone from this store?"

"Yes."

"Why it's shut up."

"What of it? I locked up and waited for you in yonder doorway."

"All right," replied Fred. "I'm the messenger."

"I want you to deliver this package at that address in the Bronx," said the man, handing him a paper with one hand and holding out the package with the other.

Fred took both and he couldn't help noticing that the package was uncommonly heavy for its size.

"Who pays?" asked the boy.

"I do. Here's a V. Settle with the office for the time, pay your own car fare and keep the change. You've got to go some distance, and the errand is worth a good tip."

"I should say so, as it will take me over my time."

"Over your time?"

"Yes. I'm off duty at eight. Any answer?"

"None."

"Is that all?"

"That's all."

"All right, sir; I'll see that the package reaches its destination."

He struck a match to look at the address on the paper and the man drew back out of range of the light. Fred was well acquainted with Greater New York, but he did not recognize the name of the street given.

"Say," he said, "dropping the match on the wet pavement, 'I don't know this street. What station had I better get off at?'"

"Go to the end of the line, and the ticket agent may be able to tell you. If not somebody else in the neighborhood will be able to direct you. You'll have quite a walk, but you should make it from here in about two hours. The street lies northwest of the station, off Boston Road, and you can't miss the house, for it's the only one in the block—an old three-story mansion, much out of repair, sitting back from the road, with a picket fence in front. The gate is about in the center."

"Two hours," said Fred, "and it's half-past seven now. Is this package expected?"

"It is. Ring the bell, hand it in to whoever answers the ring, say nothing and come away."

Ten minutes later Fred was standing on the platform of the Fulton street station waiting for an elevated train to come along. He didn't have long to wait, and was soon speeding uptown on the Third avenue line.

The train made good time in spite of the thick fog which shut out the view ahead, but the motorman in his little compartment of the first car had to keep his wits about him. He held one hand on the brake-control, ready to apply it the moment he had occasion to shut off the power. Fred amused himself looking out of the window at the dim lights that flashed from the nearby houses into the mist. He couldn't make out the buildings themselves for they were blotted out by the darkness and the fog. Up the Bowery the train sped and then dashed into Third avenue at the Cooper Institute. It seemed a long ride to 128th street, after passing which the train rolled across a bridge spanning the Harlem river at that point, and then dashed on

up the Bronx. The terminus of the road was not far then as it is now, but it extended quite a distance up into a district at that time not thickly settled.

Station after station was reached and passed, and at last the train reached the end of the route.

"Last station—all out," shouted the brakeman, putting his head in at the door.

Fred was the only one left in that car, and grabbing up his package he made his way out on the platform.

"Know where Blank street is?" he asked one of the train hands.

"Yes. It's over in that direction, and is some distance from here. It begins at Boston Road. Know where that is?"

"Yes," replied the Messenger 99.

"Well, you go on to Boston Road and cross over. Then turn north. Keep right on till you come to Blank street. You'll see the name on the lamp-post."

Fred thanked him and started on the last stage of his journey. He was quite relieved to find that Blank street could be so easily reached. He had expected some trouble in finding it. The fog was not near so thick up here as it was in lower Manhattan, and that was also an advantage to him.

The clock of a saloon near Boston Road showed him that it was a quarter of nine. Five minutes afterward he was walking up the Road, and in ten or twelve minutes he saw the name Blank street on the gas lamp. It ran away into the darkness on his left, a vista of mist, feebly illuminated at intervals by gas lamps.

"Now which side of the street is the house on?" thought Fred. "He didn't tell me that. Well, never mind, I'll find it, as it's the only one in the block and I've got a good description of it."

At first he passed many houses, but they soon thinned out.

"I wish I'd thought of asking him how many blocks up this street I had to walk, then all I'd have to do would be to keep count," said the boy to himself, as the street grew more and more lonesome looking.

Finally he struck a block on which there wasn't a house on the side he was walking, nor did there appear to be any on the opposite side either. The mist was not so thick but that he could have told if there was a picket fence across the way. So he went on to the next block.

"It's like walking along a country road up here. I wonder who the people are who live so far up in the wilds? I dare say it doesn't look so lonesome in the daytime, but I shouldn't want to live here just the same. Think of getting home from a theatre at about midnight and walking up here in the gloom. A person could easily be held up, robbed and murdered and no one would be the wiser till the daylight. I'll bet my folks wouldn't live here if they got a house rent free, and that would be a big item for us to save. My sister would have to start to her work an hour earlier, and she wouldn't get home before dark in the summer time."

The block he was on was without a house on either side. The third block in succession likewise.

"I say, where do I fetch up at? The first thing

I know I may tumble on to the tracks of the New Haven railroad. Wow!"

With unexpected suddenness he slid into a hole and the package slipped from under his arm. It struck something hard and gave forth a metallic ring.

"I thought this package wasn't wood," he muttered as he picked himself up and continued on his way.

There was a gas lamp at the next corner, and the light showed him that the paper covering was torn away from the end of the package. He now saw that it was a stout tin box, something like those used in the safe deposit vaults, he was carrying. There were three gilt initials on the end of it—T. V. W. Fred repaired the damage as well as he could and proceeded on his way. In the next block he came to a picket fence. Following it up he made out a three-story house sitting back perhaps fifty feet, with a gate in the fence facing it.

"This is the place at last. Lord, how glad I am that I'm at the end of my trip. Not a light in the place. Never mind, they expect the package, and the bell will rouse them up."

Fred passed into the neglected grounds and walked up to the front door. It was an old-fashioned portal, such as was in style more than fifty years before. Fred looked for the bell handle. He saw it and reached out his hand to pull it. At that moment a succession of wild screams rang out from an upper floor at the back of the house.

CHAPTER II.—The House in the Bronx.

"Great Scott! Some woman is in trouble," cried Messenger 99, transfixed by the urgent note in the cries.

"Help! Help!" shrieked the voice again.

"What can be the matter?" breathed the boy.

"Is the house on fire?"

Instead of ringing the bell he dashed around the house by the graveled path and looked up at the back windows. Not a light glimmered in any of the windows, but he heard a window slammed down with some violence, and the sudden choking off of one last shriek.

"Heavens! I'm afraid there's something wrong. That was a girl, and one would fancy she was being murdered by her cries," he said.

A smothered cry followed by piteous appeals for mercy, barely audible, reached his ears. The sounds died out as if the person was dragged away, and then silence.

"Say, I don't half like this," muttered Fred. "There is surely something doing in the house that can't be right. Nobody screams like that unless they are up against some danger of a serious kind. What ought I to do? I'll have to deliver the box anyway, for that is in the line of my duty, but I'd like to find out who the people are that are living here, and the meaning of those cries."

At that moment it suddenly came on to rain—one of those quick, hard showers that drench to the bone one out in it but do not last long. Instead of hastening back to the front of the house, Fred backed up against the building, the projecting eaves of which offered shelter from the downpour. In doing this he did not see

where he was going. His heels struck the edge of an inclined cellar flap, he lost his balance and fell back upon it. The wood must have been rotten from age, for the boards gave way with a crash and he was precipitated headlong into a dark void below.

He landed on a light framework that broke his fall and collapsed under his weight, letting him down comparatively easy, but not so easy that his wits were sent wool gathering.

The tin box crashed down beside him, and lay under the debris. The rain came pelting in through the broken flap, and soon pools of water began forming on the cellar floor. Messenger 99, however, had been thrown just out of their reach, and he lay dazed and motionless in the wreck of the framework. Five minutes later he began to move and finally sat up.

"What in thunder happened to me, and where am I at?" Fred asked himself, as he looked around in the dense darkness which surrounded him. In a moment or two his thoughts collected themselves and he recollected his fall.

"I must be in the cellar of the house," he said.

He listened, but the only sound that struck on his ears was the rain coming down for all it was worth. It pattered loudly on the remains of the wooden cellar flap.

"Where has my package got to?"

He got up, fumbled in his pocket for a match, struck it and looked around. He saw the box sticking out from amid the splintered wood and hastened to recover it.

"Now how am I going to get out of this cellar?" he asked himself, for he saw there were no steps under the broken flap. "I'll have to look around for a box, push it under the hole and climb out. No use doing that till the rain stops, but that won't be long. In the meantime I'll look for a box."

He lighted another match and began to investigate the cellar. He soon saw that the foundation of the house was probably divided in sections and he was in one of them, for the space, surrounded by stone walls, was very small. There was nothing in it but the framework he had smashed. There was an iron door, however, which communicated with somewhere else. It was closed tight, and as there was no handle to it he found that his way in that direction appeared to be blocked. Then how was he going to get out of the place, for the opening through which he had tumbled was several feet above his head?

He scratched his head and considered. Then he put down the package, pulled out his jack-knife, opened the large blade and tried to insert the point between the edge of the door and the jamb. There was some play to the door, but it wouldn't give, and that convinced him that it was fastened on the other side.

"Here's a pretty go. If I'm charged for all the time I'm away from the office I see my profits melting away to nothing," said Fred to himself, running the blade of his knife up the crack.

It struck an obstacle. The boy felt it with the knife and decided that it was a hook.

"I wonder if I could push it up and open the door?" he thought.

He tried and after the second attempt succeeded. The door then yielded to the push he gave it. Striking the third match he found himself in a

larger section of the cellar. Here he found several boxes standing around, two of which combined he judged would enable him to get out of the place by the opening he had made by accident. He selected two of the boxes and carried them into place where he fell. It was still raining hard so he was in no hurry to leave. He sat down to wait for it to let up.

"It's a wonder the people in the house didn't hear the racket I made coming down here. Maybe the noise of the rain prevented the sound reaching their ears," he mused. "I wouldn't like them to catch me here, for they might take me for a thief waiting for a chance to clean out the house. But what am I to judge by those screams and cries for help I heard before the rain came on? Is there anything wrong about the people who occupy this house? It can't be that they were murdering that poor girl. That doesn't look reasonable. Yet they must have been doing something to her. I wish I dared investigate, but I have no right to go nosing around the place. I'd be sure to be discovered, and then I'd probably be roughly handled."

Fred pondered over the situation and finally decided to look around a little and see if there was anything that looked suspicious. He returned to the big cellar, and by the help of matchlight saw another iron door which was closed. This had an iron knob to it and was not fastened. Opening it he flashed the match into a third cellar at one end of which he saw a wooden stairway leading to the ground floor above. He ventured up the short flight and found an ordinary door before him. It was not locked or otherwise secured so he stepped cautiously into an entry. He listened but the house was silent. He struck another match and saw a door before him. Opening it he looked into the kitchen.

At one end was a door opening on the rear grounds, at the other a door leading to another room, he presumed. He walked over to the back door and saw that it was locked and bolted. It struck him that this would be an easy way to leave the house, but not having brought his package with him he made no attempt to avail himself of this avenue of exit. He tiptoed to the other door and opening it with due caution discovered an entry and back staircase. Crossing the entry and opening the door there he saw the dining-room before him.

He went in as far as the table, and then he concluded that he was taking some risk in going further. The flash of a match showed him an envelope on the table and he picked it up to see the name it was addressed to. The match suddenly went out and as he was about to light another he heard steps coming down the front staircase.

"I guess I'd better skip back," he thought, and he retired the way he came holding the envelope in his hand. When he reached the first cellar he saw that it had stopped raining. Shoving the envelope into his pocket, he placed the boxes in position, took up his package and mounted to the opening. The fog had almost disappeared. After reflecting a few minutes he came to the conclusion that there was nothing more he could do except deliver his package, so he went around to the front door and pulled the bell. In less than a minute a window was opened on the ground floor and a man stuck out his head.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"A messenger," replied Fred.

"Who do you come from?"

"I've a heavy package here from a man who handed it to me on South street with directions to bring it here. I belong to the A. D. T. messenger service."

"Come around under this window."

Fred obeyed.

The man looked down at him, saw his messenger cap and seemed satisfied.

"Pass the box up to me," he said.

Fred did so.

"Sign that ticket please, and put the time of night on it. I've lost a lot of time finding this house. It seems to be out in the country," he said.

The man chuckled.

"Wait where you are till I come back. Did Cordes pay—I mean were you paid at the other end?"

"Yes."

The man disappeared. In a minute or two he returned.

"Here is your slip and a dollar for yourself. Good-night."

He shut down the window abruptly.

Fred put the slip in one pocket, the money in another, and started for the gate. As soon as he was on the other side of it, he took a good look at the house, and then walked back the road he had come.

CHAPTER III.—The Newspaper Paragraph.

It was half-past twelve in the morning when he reported at the desk at the office—an hour and a half after his leaving time. The night operator was behind the counter and only a couple of lads he did not know were kept there for a possible call until the regular day force came to work at eight in the morning. The man in charge, who was nodding over a magazine, looked up when Fred appeared. Messenger 99 reported his return.

"Where in thunder have you been all this time?" asked the operator. "You were sent in answer to a telephone call to No. — South street at 7 o'clock, now it's half-past twelve."

"To a house away up in the wilds of the Bronx. I carried a heavy package up there for a man who met me in front of the address given. No.—South street is a ship chandlery store, and it was shut up. The man said he sent the call for a messenger and was waiting outside for him. That was half-past seven."

"And he sent you to the Bronx?"

"Yes."

"And has it taken you so long to go there and back?"

"Yes."

"You could have gone to Mount Vernon and back in less time. How about the toll?"

"I've got it. Three dollars ought to cover it with carfare."

The man figured.

"That's right. Hand it over."

"There's \$2.75. That pays for the time. Don't forget to credit me with four hours and a half extra time—from eight to half-past twelve."

"All right, young man. I'll make a note of it."

"Goodnight," said Fred, starting for the door. "I've made \$3.15, besides what is coming to me for four hours and a half overtime," thought Messenger 99 as he walked toward the nearest Sixth avenue station. "That isn't bad, but I guess I've earned every cent of it. I wouldn't care to have such errands often."

Then he began to think once more about the house in the Bronx and the girl who had screamed for help. In fact the girl and the house had occupied the whole of his thoughts on the way back so that he had forgotten all about the envelope he had taken from the dining-room table was in his pocket at that moment. When he reached the modest flat in Harlem where he lived with his widowed mother and two sisters, one of whom worked for a Broadway cloak house, it was after one, and he was in such a hurry to get into bed that he lost no time in retiring for the night.

In the morning when he appeared for breakfast he told his mother that he was employed four hours and a half over his regular time the night before. He merely said this was due to the fact that he had to go some distance up in the Bronx, and it took him a long time. He met Bennie at the station as usual, for they went down town together.

"When did you get back to the office?" asked his chum.

"I got back at half-past twelve," replied Fred.

"You don't say," said Bennie in surprise. "Where were you sent?"

"Into the wilds of the Bronx."

"It was a nice night to go up there."

"I should say so. Do you know where Blank street is?"

"No," said Bennie, as they stepped aboard the train.

"I guess it's more of a road than a street. There was no sidewalk after the first three blocks, and hardly any houses. There were gas lamps so I suppose it has been opened up as a street. I went out about ten blocks, which is all of a mile as the blocks were long ones."

"Where did you go to?"

"An old-fashioned house, the only one in the block, and the only one in four blocks. Whether the street ran beyond the end of that block I didn't notice."

"Did you have to go to the end of the elevated?"

"I did. Then I walked to Boston Road. Up that half a mile or so till I found Blank street, and then I walked west to the house. The tramp was bad enough, but I carried a heavy tin box done up in a newspaper with me."

"Gee! I don't envy you."

"Well, I made \$3.15 for myself out of it, besides I've got four hours and a half overtime coming to me."

"You did well after all. How came you to make so much?"

"The man who called for a messenger gave me a fiver and told me to keep whatever I could make out of it, and the man who took in the box at the house tipped me a dollar."

"They were all right."

"Perhaps they were, but I have my doubts."

"Why?"

"Something happened at the house just as I got there that I don't like."

"What was it?"

Fred told Bennie about the screams and cries for help he had heard coming from a girl on an upper floor.

"Did you ask the man about them?"

"I did not."

"I should have done so."

"Not if you'd wasted an hour around and in the house like I did before I finally rang the bell. He'd have asked me what I was doing during that time."

"What were you doing? Trying to find out about the cries? How could you have been in the house before you rang for admittance?"

Fred explained to him the accident he had met with which had tumbled him into the cellar.

"Gosh! You were lucky that you didn't break your neck."

"I was that. If it hadn't been for that light framework I fell on I dare say you might never have seen me again alive."

Fred then told him of the short investigation he had made of the lower part of the house as far as the dining-room.

"That reminds me I picked up an envelope on the dining-room table and brought it away with me. I forgot all about it."

He fished it out of his pocket. It was addressed to Martin Langley, Manor House, Blank street.

"That must be the name of that old house," said Fred.

There was an enclosure in the envelope and he pulled it out. He took the liberty of reading it. It ran as follows:

"Friend Langley—Sorry to learn that the miss is giving you so much trouble. You will get well repaid in the end, as I told you when I handed her over to your care. Her father is due to arrive any day now, and when I have secured the spoils we will divide and dust out. Be prepared to hear from me at any moment. Yours,

"JIM."

Fred read the note aloud to Bennie.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"Looks as if there was something crooked in the wind when he talks about dividing the spoils and dusting out," replied Bennie.

"That's the way I look at it. Miss means some girl that Langley is taking care of for the party named Jim. If she is giving Langley trouble one might infer that she is being kept at the house against her will. I'll bet she is the one I heard scream out last night. Maybe he caught her trying to escape and punished her for it. The note says her father is due to arrive any day. Looks as if the spoils were connected with him, and that Jim Somebody intends to rob him as soon as he reaches New York. Maybe the girl is on to the scheme and they are holding her a prisoner until the job has been pulled off."

"I'll bet that's the idea," said Bennie. "What are you going to do with the letter? Take it to the police, and tell them what you heard last night?"

"I'd have to explain how I got hold of the letter. It might not be well for me to admit how it came into my possession. There might be nothing in the matter after all—that is nothing calling for police interference—in which case I might get into trouble. I was paid to carry a package to the

manor house. If it became known that after I got there I broke through the cellar door, and went snooping around the lower part of the house, like a thief in the dark, this man Langley might report my movements to the superintendent of the company, and if my explanation was not considered satisfactory why I might lose my job."

"Then you won't do anything with the letter?"

"I couldn't tell you now just what I'll do, if anything."

Fred opened his morning paper and started to look through it while his chum did the same. After reading the principal news Fred's eyes caught the following paragraph:

"UNKNOWN MAN FOUND UNCONSCIOUS ON SOUTH STREET. Officer Larkins, while patrolling his beat last evening about nine o'clock, found a man lying in a sprawling attitude in the gutter on the west side of South street on the block just below the Brooklyn bridge. The policeman sized up the case as a plain drunk, and securing assistance carried the man to the station house, where it was discovered that he had a severe wound on his head, apparently inflicted by some blunt instrument. He had evidently been cleaned out and left in the gutter, for his pockets were empty. He had nothing about him to establish his identity, except the letters T. V. W. on the neck lining of his coat. His age was about fifty. He wore bushy whiskers and his face, hands and neck were heavily tanned from exposure to the weather. He was sent to the Chambers street hospital."

"T. V. W.," muttered Fred; "those letters seem familiar to me. Where have I seen them?"

He pondered over them for a few minutes, then he remembered.

"Why, yes. Those were the letters that I saw on the box I carried to the house in the Bronx last night. The man was found about nine o'clock on South street a block above the place where that chap handed me the box to deliver. Could it be that he is the person alluded to in this paragraph? I didn't see his face because he had it hidden by his turned-up coat collar, and the fog was very dense. He might have had whiskers, and have been deeply tanned for all I know to the contrary. He might have been knocked down and robbed soon after I left him. I'll ask the operator to let me see the ticket I handed the man to sign. That ought to show his name."

Fred clipped the paragraph out of the paper and put it in his pocket for future reference. Soon after he and Bennie left the train.

CHAPTER IV.—The Arm At The Window.

When Fred reported at the office he asked the day operator to let him see the ticket he had turned in the night before. It was shown him, and he looked at the place where the man who had given him the box had signed. The writing was like a hen's scratch, and he could make nothing out of it. He returned the ticket and took his seat on the bench. In a short time he was called on to go out. His directions called him to an office on Worth street. The man gave him a small

package to carry to an address on Greenwich street. He received a dime for himself over and above the toll charges.

After delivering the package he started back to the office. As he was crossing Greenwich street he was hailed by someone, and looking around saw a young lad in knickerbockers he knew perched on top of a case on a truck, apparently enjoying a free ride. The truck was heavily loaded with cases, and the youth sat on one of the rear ones, which was held in place by a thick rope slung across it.

"Hello, Eddie," he said, "taking a ride?"

"Yep. Jump up, the truck is goin' your way," replied the lad.

On the spur of the moment Fred accepted the invitation without considering whether the truckman, whose back was toward them, would object or not. They rode along for a couple of blocks very comfortably indeed, and then the truck came to a stop, blocked by a line of vehicles passing down the cross street ahead. The driver presently got the signal from the policeman to move on. As the horses suddenly started ahead there came a jerk. It caused the rope to part that held the case.

Messenger 99 and his friend fell from their perch, the heavy packing-case falling after them, and threatening to crush both boys. Fred struck the street on his feet, went down on his hands and knees, and then rolled clear of the case. Eddie was not so fortunate. The case hit the street on its edge, and fell over on the youth's right leg, pinning him to the ground. He uttered a shriek of pain and terror, and fainted. Fred, though roughly shaken up, jumped on his feet, and perceiving his friend's predicament, lifted the case off the boy's leg and held it while a passerby pulled Eddie clear.

A crowd gathered in a moment, and the policeman at the crossing came up to see what the trouble was. It soon was seen that Eddie's leg was badly crushed, and he was carried to the sidewalk, and an ambulance summoned. The truck driver was arrested, though he protested he did not know the boys were taking a free ride. Fred substantiated his statement, as far as he was concerned, but Eddie, being unconscious, had nothing to say. The policeman took Fred's name and address, and the number on his cap, and let him go. He did not go, however, till the ambulance came up and carried Eddie away to the Chambers street hospital. Then he returned to the office and reported the incident.

He got a calling down, of course, for he had no business to take a ride on a truck, and was told whatever time he lost in attending court, if required to do so, would be deducted from his wages. On the whole Fred was very thankful to get off so easy. He pictured to himself how unfortunate he would have been had the case fallen on him instead of Eddie, or on both of them, for that matter. When Bennie came in from an errand he told him about the narrow escape he had had.

"You were lucky, old man," said Bennie. "Was your friend badly hurt?"

"He had his right leg crushed. I feel dead sorry for him. That rope must have been rotten. Just think if it had parted at a crossing and the case had fallen on somebody and killed them."

"Your friend ought to be able to get damages from the truck owner."

"I'm afraid the fact that he was sneaking a ride would spoil his case."

"One case has been spoiled anyway."

"What do you mean?"

"The packing case," grinned Bennie.

"That's a bad joke, Bennie," he said, but at that moment he was called to go out again, and was soon on the street. Early on the following afternoon he got permission to go to the hospital to ask about Eddie. He was informed that his friend's leg had been badly crushed, and the bone broken in two places. He would be obliged to remain in the hospital for some time. Fred then inquired about the man mentioned in the newspaper paragraph. He was told that the person in question had come to his senses, but seemed to be suffering from concussion of the brain, or something akin to it. He was unable to give any account of himself, or even to tell who he was.

"According to the newspaper his initials are T. V. W.," said Fred.

"We have so designated him on the card. It is all we know about him at present."

That was all Fred could learn about the man, so he left, still wondering if he was the person for whom he had executed the mission to the Bronx. Next day was Sunday, and neither he nor Bennie had to work. In the afternoon after he had had his dinner Fred called on his chum and suggested that they go up to Blank street and take a look at the old manor house. Bennie was willing, and they started. Fred took his friend over the same route he had followed in the mist and darkness.

It looked altogether different now in the afternoon sunshine. Bennie, however, agreed that it was a long tramp. They reached the house at last, and walked slowly by, looking at it narrowly. The grounds were in bad shape, showing that no care was taken to keep the place in order.

"That must have been a fine residence once," said Bennie. "That lawn would look bang-up if it was put in shape and the grass cut regularly."

"One would hardly think anyone lived there from the looks of things," said Fred. "All the front window-shades are closed tight. They were the same way night before last when I was up here; but that might be expected on such a night. Now I should think they would be open to let in the light."

The street was opened one block further, and the boys walked to the end of it, and then turned back. As they passed the house on their return they saw a white arm pushed through the shutters of one of the windows on the third floor front, and a hand waved something like a handkerchief at them, for they were the only persons in the vicinity. Under ordinary circumstances they would have thought some girl was trying to flirt with them. Fred, however, took a different meaning from the signal. The note he had taken from the house, coupled with the cries of a girl he had heard the night he brought the package, had impressed him with the idea that some girl was held a prisoner in the house.

He had a chivalrous respect for all girls, due, perhaps, to the fact that he had two nice sisters of whom he was very fond. When he saw that signal he believed the fair prisoner wanted to

communicate her unfortunate situation to them. As he had been thinking a good deal about this unknown girl, and the fate she appeared to be up against, he was only too eager to find out, if possible, what this person who was signaling them wanted.

"Come on, Bennie. I believe that's the girl whom I heard shriek, and who seems to be held in that house against her will. She is evidently signaling us for some purpose. I'm going to find out what it is if I can," said Fred.

He pushed open the gate and entered the grounds, and Bennie followed. The moment they advanced toward the house the hand was withdrawn. A cracking sound succeeded, and one of the blind slats fell broken to the top of the portico beneath. A second slat was demolished by a pair of hands. A third followed suit.

"That girl means business up there," said Fred, in some excitement.

"Is she trying to get out?" said Bennie.

"I couldn't tell you what her intentions are. I imagine, however, that she wants to communicate with us," replied Fred.

By this time the boys were close to the house. The girl reached her arm out again, and they saw that there was a paper in her hand. She waved it toward them, then crushed it in her fingers and raised her arm to throw it toward them. Before she could accomplish the maneuver she suddenly disappeared, and they heard her scream out.

"Somebody has nabbed her from the inside," cried Fred, now all excitement.

At that moment a crushed paper came flying through the fractured blinds, and fell on top of the portico.

"She's thrown the paper out," said Bennie.

"I see she has. It's fallen on the top of the portico. We must get it. Give me a boost up, will you?"

"Sure," said Bennie, proceeding to do it.

Fred, disregarding the effect of the climb on his Sunday suit, scrambled up on the portico, reached for and grabbed the paper. As he turned to spring down he heard a window thrown up behind him, the blinds were thrown open, and a man sprang out on the roof of the portico and laid hold of the boy by the arm.

"What are you doin' up here?" he demanded roughly.

"Nothing," replied Fred. "Let go of me."

"You came up here after a paper. Hand it to me."

"Hand you nothing," replied the plucky lad, trying to shake the man off.

His captor's grip was too strong for him to disengage himself.

"Give me that paper," hissed the man.

"Not on your life," replied Fred, doggedly.

The fellow encircled the boy with both arms, threw him down on the roof, and knelt on his chest. Fred, seeing his disadvantage, flung the paper over the portico, and it fell at Bennie's feet. With a furious imprecation, the man struck him a blow with his fist in the head that stunned him, and then, jumping off the portico, seized Bennie just as he put the paper in his pocket.

"I want that paper. Out with it or I'll break your head," he gritted.

"You won't get it from me," replied Bennie, struggling with him.

The man was in no humor for fooling. He swung the boy around violently, and Bennie's head came in contact with the nearest post that supported the portico. The boy sank limp and unconscious in the man's grasp.

CHAPTER V.—In A Bad Fix.

When Fred recovered his senses he was surprised to find himself in some dark place with his arms bound behind his back. He was in a sitting position with his back against a stone wall, and his feet stretched out before him. It didn't take him long to figure out that he was a prisoner, and he judged that he was in the cellar of the manor house. His supposition was correct, for that was where he was.

"I hope Bennie got away with that paper," he said to himself. "Then he could bring the police here and rescue the girl and me, too."

Unfortunately Bennie failed to get away with the paper, and was a prisoner, like himself, not six feet away from him at that moment, but still unconscious from the knock he had received. Fred tried to get on his feet, and discovered that something held him down. This something was the slack end of the rope that held his hands, which was tied to a ring in the wall.

"I seem to be up against it," he muttered. "I guess I'm here to stay till somebody comes and frees me."

A couple of hours passed slowly and drearily away, and then Fred heard something move not far from him. His first impression was that it was a rat. The idea of a big rodent coming on him in the dark, and he helpless to defend himself, made him shudder, for he had a natural aversion for the animal. Then he heard a groan.

Rats didn't groan, and he said: "Who is there?"

"Oh, Lord, what a pain I've got!" cried a voice he recognized as Bennie's.

"Is that you, Bennie? Are you a prisoner, too?"

"Oh!" groaned Bennie again. "Is that you, Fred?"

"Yes."

"I believe my head is broken."

"Broken! What do you mean? What happened to it?"

"That villain who came out of the window and tackled you jumped down off the portico, grabbed me, and banged my head against one of the posts so hard that I thought the house had fallen on me. I didn't remember anything more till a minute ago, when I came to. Now my head pains me something fierce. Where are we, anyway?"

"I don't see that we can be anywhere else than in the cellar of the house."

"We're somewhere in the dark. My hands are tied behind me."

"So are mine. We are prisoners."

"I wish I could lie down, but I can't. I feel so bad I don't care much what happens to me," and Bennie groaned dismally.

"I sympathize with you, old man. I suppose you've got a bad headache."

"If my head isn't broken I am lucky. I got a terrible whack."

"No fear of it being broken. If your skull were

fractured you'd be unconscious. You're suffering from the effects of the blow."

"It hurts like thunder. I don't feel like talking."

"Then don't talk. Did you get that paper?"

"Yes, but the man got it away from me, I guess, after he knocked me out."

"That fellow was too much for us both. There is something crooked going on in this house. There is no doubt about that girl, whoever she is, being held a prisoner here. I wonder what they mean to do with us? After what has happened I suppose they'll hold on to us until they're ready to leave the house. They know if we get away that we'd bring the police here to investigate matters."

Bennie made no answer. At that juncture Fred heard a door open at the end of the cellar. Then he saw a light shining through the cracks of their prison wall which appeared to be closed in with wooden boards on two sides at any rate. The light and the crunching footsteps of a man approached their pen. A door was pulled open, and the rascal who had overpowered them appeared in the opening. He flashed his lantern around, and saw the boys looking at him.

"So you've come to your senses, have you? You see what you get for buttin' in where you've no business. Why did you come to this house?"

"We were passing along the street when the girl you are evidently holding a prisoner on the top floor signaled to us with her handkerchief," replied Fred.

"How do you know she was signaling to you?" asked the man.

"Because we were the only persons around."

"You say it was a girl who signaled. How do you know that?"

"It was a girl's arm."

"So you came to see what she wanted, eh?"

"Yes."

"You were foolish to take any notice. That's my daughter. She's crazy, and we keep her on the top floor rather than send her to an asylum."

"If that is so," replied Fred, who was satisfied that the man was lying, "why did you attack us so viciously, and, after you had done us up, bring us here and tie us up in this dark place, which seems to be in the cellar of the house?"

"Because I was angry at you both for trespassing on my property."

"This is your property, then?"

"Yes, it belongs to me."

Fred didn't believe him.

"Well, you had no right to throw me down and pound me in the face, nor to hurt my friend's head."

"You had no right to climb on top of the portico."

"I didn't hurt the portico by climbing on it."

"That makes no difference. You went there to get the paper my daughter threw out."

"What if I did?"

"You had no business to meddle with it."

"Why not? The girl signaled us to come to the house, and when we came she threw the paper to us. That was a sign it was intended for us."

"Didn't I tell you the girl is crazy?"

"How were we to know she was crazy?"

"You know it now."

"I have only your word for it."

"Isn't that enough?" snarled the man.

"No, it isn't. You may have some reason for saying she's crazy."

"What reason could I have? She's my daughter."

"You say she is, but that doesn't make it so."

"Are you looking for trouble?" hissed the man.

"No. We've already found more than we want."

"Who are you, and where do you live?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"That's my business."

"After the treatment you've handed out to us you're not entitled to know anything."

"Look here, young man, it won't pay you to be independent with me," said the man in a threatening way.

"You'd better release us and let us go, or you will get into trouble yourself."

"Are you goin' to tell me who you are, and where you live?"

"Will you let us go if we do?"

The man held the light before Fred's face and looked at him narrowly.

"I think I have seen you before," he said.

"Maybe you have, but I never saw you before to my knowledge."

"You're a messenger boy, ain't you?"

"What if I am?"

"You brought a package here the night before last, didn't you?"

"I did."

"I thought so. Your face seemed familiar to me, and your voice particularly so. How long were you around the house before you rang the bell?"

"How wrong?" asked Fred, sparring for time.

"Yes. Did you go to the back of the house and fall in the cellar?"

"I did," replied Fred, who scorned to seek shelter under a lie, which might not have availed him anyway.

"Why did you go there?"

"If you want to know the truth I went there because I heard a girl screaming for help."

"So. You heard her, then?"

"I did."

"That was my crazy daughter. She kicked up that racket a long time before you rang the bell. How came you to fall in the cellar?"

Fred told him how the accident happened.

"Did you hurt yourself?"

"Not much. That framework saved me."

"You opened the iron door between that place and the main cellar."

"I did."

"How?"

"With my knife."

"Why did you do it?"

"I wanted to find something to help me get out through the hole."

"You found a couple of boxes and used them."

"Yes."

"Did you leave the cellar as soon as you found the boxes?"

"I waited till the rain stopped."

"Didn't you come upstairs and look into some of the rooms on the ground floor?"

"What makes you think I did anything like that?"

"I'm asking you if you did so."

"Well, what if I did?" replied Fred, desperately.

"You went into the dining-room and took a letter off the table."

Fred made no answer.

"You carried that letter away with you. What did you do with it?"

Fred remained silent.

"You won't answer, eh? You read it, of course. It excited your curiosity, and you came up here this afternoon to see what more you could find out about this house. Isn't that so?"

"Have it your own way," he said.

"What did you do with that letter?"

"I've got it home."

"What idea did you draw from it?"

"That you and your friend Jim were working some scheme to rob some man whose daughter you are holding in this house against her will."

"Very clever," sneered the man. "Think yourself an amateur detective, and so you came up here this afternoon to snoop around and see what else you could find out. Well, you've found out that the people here are not asleep, haven't you? You butted into a hornet's nest and have got stung. You are likely to get stung again before we are through with you. You and your friend will stay here until we have decided what to do with you."

"You mean to hold us prisoners, then?"

"I do."

"Then that establishes your true character in my eyes," said Fred.

"Does it? You suspected things wasn't right here anyway after hearing those screams and reading that note."

"That's true enough."

"But you weren't sure, or you'd have gone to the police."

"I'm sure now."

"What good does it do you? You are our prisoner, and you can't injure us. I guess it was lucky for us you came here this afternoon. When I found the cellar door busted, the door between the coal-hole and the main cellar open, and the note missin', I did some thinkin' and concluded that Messenger 99, for I noticed the number on your cap when I looked at you, was at the bottom of it. I have been figurin' on gettin' hold of you, but didn't know how to do it. Now you've saved us a lot of trouble by walkin' into our clutches yourself. You won't find it so easy to walk out again. You won't run any more errands for a while, I'm thinkin'. Lots of people disappear suddenly in a big city like New York. Sometimes they turn up at the morgue—sometimes they never turn up. It all depends."

"On what?" asked Fred, nervously.

"Why they disappear."

The speaker grinned malevolently at the boy, took up the lantern, walked out of the door, locked it with a hasp and catch and walked off upstairs.

CHAPTER VI.—Outwitting The Enemy.

"What do you think of him, Bennie?" asked Fred.

"He's a rascal."

"Our suspicions were well founded."

"I should say so."

"We have got in up to our necks."

"That's what we have."

"That chap is satisfied we know too much about their affairs to let us go free, and so it is clear we are to be kept prisoners here."

"It looks that way. I don't like what he said about people disappearing suddenly, to turn up in the morgue or not at all. I hope he and his pals have no intention of doing away with us."

"I don't think we're dangerous enough to their interests as to call for such extreme measures as that. We really don't know much."

"We know enough to set the police on this place, and that man doesn't intend we shall get a chance to do it."

"How is your head?"

"It's better than it was, but it hurts a lot yet."

"My folks will have a fit if I don't turn up to-night," said Fred.

"So will mine," replied Bennie. "Can't we make our escape some way?"

"I wish we could, but I don't see how. My hands are not only tied, but the rope also holds me to the wall."

"I'm tied to something, too. It feels like a wooden post."

"Try and work yourself loose. Maybe you'll have better luck than me. I was tied to stay so."

"I believe I can get free," said Bennie a minute later. "The line is a bit loose, and my hands are small."

"Do your best, then. If you get free you can help me. We must turn the tables on that fellow if we can."

"S'pose we do get free in here, how are we going to get out of this coop? We are locked in here," said Bennie.

"Never mind about that. One thing at a time."

"I've got one hand free," said Bennie, presently.

"Then you ought to have no trouble——"

"Both are free now," interrupted his chum, in a tone of satisfaction. "If I had a knife I could cut the rope that holds me to the post."

"It must be knotted. Loosen it with your fingers. I've got a knife in my pocket, but it won't do you any good unless you could reach me."

"I'm too close to the post to reach the knot."

"Try and work yourself around. You ought to be able to do it."

Bennie did try and after some exertion succeeded. Then he busied himself with the knots. He used both his teeth and his fingers on them.

"How are you getting on?" asked Fred.

"Slowly. This is not an easy job."

"You didn't intend that for a pun, did you?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said this is not an easy job, referring to the knot you are working on."

"Never thought of such a thing as a joke. It's no joking matter. My mouth is full of fibres."

"Are you using your teeth?"

"Part of the time," replied Bennie, working away.

Neither spoke for several minutes, and then Bennie announced that he had got the first knot out, and he guessed the second would come easier. Five minutes afterwards Bennie had freed himself from the post, but the loop was still around his armpits. That, however, didn't matter.

"I'm clear," he said.

"Good. Come over here, shove your hand into my left pocket, get out my knife, and cut me free," said Fred.

Bennie lost no time in carrying out his chum's directions, and in a short time Fred was clear of the ropes. Then Bennie relieved himself of the noose. Fred always carried a match-safe with him. The first thing he did was to strike a light so they could get a view of their surroundings. They were penned in an enclosure that had once upon a time been used as a wine-bin. Some of the racks built to hold bottles were still in their places. Others had gone to pieces, and the debris lay scattered around on the floor. The walls and ceiling were thickly coated with dirty black cobwebs that hung in great festoons like the moth-eaten and discolored drapery of an old medieval castle-room that has been locked up for ages.

"This is a beastly hole to put a fellow in," said Bennie.

"What does that rascal or his pals care? Now for the door."

The door yielded about an inch to Fred's touch. A second match showed him that it was secured by a hasp and a staple.

"Say, this is too easy," chuckled Messenger 99.

"Do you think we can get out?" asked Bennie.

"I wish I was as sure of getting out of the house as I am of getting out of this pen," replied Fred.

He picked up a fragment of wood, shoved it through the play of the door, and knocked out the peg that held the hasp. Then he opened the door, and they both stepped out into the cellar proper.

"Now I'll replace the staple and the peg, and leave that rascal to wonder how we got out," said Fred.

At that moment they heard a noise at the end of the cellar. A door opened at the top of a flight of steps, and a light appeared.

"What shall we do?" whispered Bennie, fearing they would be discovered.

"Follow me," said Fred, whose previous visit to the cellar stood him in good stead now.

He knew there was a pile of boxes close by, and he led his companion over to them. They crouched down beside them as their enemy entered the cellar with a lantern in one hand and a tray containing a jug of water and some sandwiches in the other. He went straight to the wine-bin, put the lantern down and opened the door. Reaching for the lantern he entered the bin. Then a daring idea flashed across Fred's brain. He darted over to the bin just in time to hear the man's exclamation of astonishment when he found the prisoners gone. Fred slammed the door shut and locked the man inside. Then he bent the peg so that it could not be knocked out the way he had done.

The man turned around and tried to push the door open. When he found he couldn't he uttered a string of invectives not to be found in any dictionary.

"Let me out," he roared.

Fred made no reply, but returning to Bennie, who had been astonished at the nervy trick he had pulled off, and taking him by the arm, led him toward the stairs that furnished the exit from the cellar. They made their way up the steps, with the man's shouts and imprecations ringing

in their ears, and shut the door at the top of the flight after them.

"That door leads into the kitchen," said Fred.

"I hear someone in there," whispered Bennie.

Somebody was rattling dishes and walking around. Fred peeked through the keyhole and caught a fleeting glimpse of a hard-looking woman, who seemed to be the cook and probably general domestic.

"We can't go in there," said Fred, "for she's doubtless hand-in-glove with the rascals who make this house their rendezvous."

"What are we going to do, then? There is no other way of getting out of this place we're in."

"We'll have to return to the cellar and try and get out through the flap that I broke the other night," said Fred.

They went back into the cellar. The imprisoned rascal was making a great noise, kicking against the woodwork and trying to force the door by throwing his body against it. Fred led the way to the iron door through which he had entered the main cellar two nights before. The catch was on it, and the boy threw it off, giving them entrance to the coal hole. The boxes he had used had been removed, and the flap repaired. It was secured by means of a heavy clasp held in place by an iron pin, and as this was inside it offered no obstacle to the boys' escape that way.

Fred rushed back to get a couple of boxes so they could climb up and reach it. Before he could secure them the cellar door opened, and the woman appeared. She had been attracted by the noise the man was making and had come down to find out the cause of it, though she knew the rascal was in the cellar. Probably she suspected there was something wrong. She caught sight of Fred when she reached the bottom of the stairs and stopped.

Fred, of course, saw he was discovered, and the two stared at one another. The imprisoned rascal gave the door another bang. The woman seemed to understand his predicament, and started for the bin to let him out.

"Bennie," shouted Fred, as he moved over to intercept her, "come here—quick."

"Out of my way," cried the woman, fiercely.

"You don't let that chap out if I know it," said Fred, striding in front of her as Bennie appeared in answer to his call. The man heard the woman's voice, and called to her to release him from the bin. She seized Fred and tried to throw him aside. The boy found she was pretty strong, and was not an easy person to handle. She, on her side, found he was not to be handled without a struggle. Being something of a fighter, she went for Fred in a lively fashion. Although the boy had no respect for her, he couldn't treat her in the same way as he would a man, for it was repugnant to him to strike a woman, no matter what her character was, and this gave her an advantage. He defended himself as best he could till Bennie rushed up and grabbed her from behind. Between them they threw her on the ground, and she hurled all manner of imprecations at them. Fred tore her apron off her and used it to tie her arms behind her back.

"We'll drag her into the coal-hole and leave her there," he said.

This they did, paying no attention to her

threats. Then Fred locked her in there by hooking the door as it was before.

"Now we'll escape by the kitchen," he said.

They dashed up the stairs and slammed the cellar door after them.

CHAPTER VII.—Agnes Wilson.

Reaching the kitchen, nothing stood between them and freedom but the door, and this was not locked. Fred, however, did not intend to leave the house without trying to rescue the girl prisoner.

"You're taking chances," said Bennie, when his friend told him of his purpose. "There may be other men in the house."

"I don't care, Bennie. It's our duty to save her."

"That fellow may break out of the bin, and then we'll have him to deal with, too."

"We'll lock the door here that communicates with the cellar," replied Fred.

When he started to do this he found there was no key in the lock, consequently it couldn't be locked.

"We'll have to barricade it," he said. "Help me push the table against it."

"That won't hold it against a man," said Bennie, after they had blocked the door.

"Then we must use something else in addition," said Fred.

There were two chairs in the kitchen, but they were not heavy enough to help matters much. There was a coal-scuttle, partly filled, and Fred told Bennie to shove that up against the door under the table.

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get the chairs in the dining-room and brace the table with them and the kitchen ones," said Fred.

He led the way to the dining-room, the table of which showed that a meal had lately been eaten there. How many persons had eaten that meal he could not tell.

"Grab a chair, Bennie, and fetch it along," said Fred, lifting one himself. They carried the four chairs into the kitchen and braced the table with them. That blocked the door completely against anyone trying to force it open from the other side. If the rascal in the bin succeeded in getting free he could not reach them by way of that door to save his life. But he could get out of the cellar through the coal-hole and the flap, just as Fred had started to do himself with Bennie, and then enter the house through the kitchen door. That possibility occurred to Fred, so as a precaution he locked the door.

"Now, come on," he said to his companion.

They passed through the dining-room into a sitting-room or parlor beyond. This room, which was bare of furniture, was at the front of the house and overlooked the lawn and the street. A door let them into the main hall where the hall door was. This door was locked, bolted, and further protected by a chain. Fred unbolted it, unhooked the chain, but did not unlock it. There was a door on the opposite side of the hall. Fred opened it, and the boys saw a large, unfurnished room, connected with another in the rear, also bare and dusty. Originally these rooms had been used as the parlor and library.

"Now we'll go upstairs and look for the girl," said Fred, leading the way.

Messenger 99 was satisfied that the prisoner was somewhere on the third, or top floor, so he did not attempt to look into any of the rooms on the second floor. They heard no sounds coming from any of the rooms, and began to think that the only occupants of the house at that time were the man and the woman locked in the cellar. If their surmise was correct then they had things their own way. At any rate they met with no obstacle to their progress toward the third floor. Reaching it they found themselves in a wide landing, on which faced four doors, indicating that number of rooms. On the right was the door of the room from the window of which the girl had waved her handkerchief at them. This door was locked, but as the key was in it on the outside Fred turned it and entered the room, followed by Bennie. The room was entirely bare of furniture or fittings. There was a door at the back with a key in it. Fred turned the key and walked into the room beyond. It was furnished with a chair, a cot, a small table, a wash-stand, and a piece of carpet that only partly covered the floor. Seated on the chair, looking out of the closed window into the gathering dusk, was a neatly dressed girl of perhaps seventeen years. She looked around as the boys entered the room. With a cry of mingled surprise and gladness she sprang on her feet.

"You are the girl who signaled to us from the window, aren't you?" said Fred.

"Yes, yes," she replied. "Did you get the paper I threw out the window?"

"Yes. It fell on the roof of the portico, and I climbed up after it. Before I could get down I was attacked by a man who jumped out of a window on the second floor. He demanded the note of me. I refused to hand it over, and tossed it to my friend standing below. Angry at my action, the man knocked me senseless, sprang down and tackled my friend, whom he also knocked out. The next thing we knew we found ourselves prisoners in the cellar. We have just escaped, after locking the man and a woman down there, and we came up here looking for you."

"And they are down there now?" she asked.

"Yes. Who are they, anyway?"

"The man is Martin Langley, and the woman he calls Moll."

"And they have been keeping you a prisoner up here?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been here?"

"Nearly a month."

"The man told me you were his daughter, and that you were crazy."

"It is false!" she cried indignantly.

"I didn't believe him. What is your name?"

"Agnes Wilson."

"My name is Fred Hooper, and my friend's name is Bennie Bennett. Why have you been detained in this house against your will?"

"It is the work of my uncle, James Cordes."

"Cordes!" said Fred. "I've heard that name lately. I remember now. When I brought a package to this house two nights ago and delivered it to the man you call Langley, he asked me if Cordes had paid me the toll. I'm a district telegraph messenger, miss. A call came to the office at about seven o'clock from a place on South street for a messenger, and I was sent. It was

foggy, as you remember. The man who sent in the call met me on the sidewalk in front of the store, and gave me the package to bring up here. It was a tin box, and had the initials T. V. W. on it."

"My father's initials," cried the girl, clasping her hands. "He has met and robbed him, then, as he intended. My poor father!"

"Then T. V. W. stands for your father?" cried Fred, thinking of the man in the hospital, who had been found knocked out on South street by the policeman.

"Yes. Thomas V. Wilson."

"He has been out of the city, and your uncle expected him to get back soon?"

"Yes. He has been out West for two years, during which time my uncle has been looking after me. I never liked Uncle Cordes, but I did not know he was an unprincipled man till I overheard him plotting with Martin Langley to rob my father, who has been quite successful at the mines, when he got back. I denounced him for his contemplated treachery, and threatened to notify the police if he persisted in carrying out his design. I made a great mistake in thus putting him on his guard, for he and Langley determined to put it out of my power to spoil their game. I was drugged and brought to this house soon afterward, and here I have been kept ever since."

"You have my sympathy, miss. Then there are only two men mixed up in this rascally scheme—your uncle and this Langley?"

"I know of no others."

"The woman is merely employed by them to look after you?"

"I suspect she is Langley's wife."

"She seems to be pretty tough, whoever she is," said Fred. "She can swear like a trooper. When Bennie and I got the better of her and locked her in the coal-hole she called us all the names in the calendar. She put up a big fight before we could do it. We've got Langley penned up in the place where he put us while we were unconscious."

"You are certainly brave boys to capture both of them. I don't see how you ever did it."

"We did it all right. Now are you ready to go away with us?"

"Oh, yes. I will go at once. My father is doubtless searching the city for me, wondering what has become of me."

"No, miss, he has had no chance to look for you. He is in the Chambers Street Hospital."

"In the hospital!" she cried with an anxious look. "How do you know?"

"A man was picked up unconscious on South street a short time after I was intrusted with the delivery of that tin box to this house. He had been robbed of everything he had on his person, even of any papers he might have had that would have established his identity. The only clew overlooked by the man who did him up, who I judge was your uncle Cordes, was the initials T. V. W. on the lining of his coat collar. I read the paragraph in the paper next morning, and I supposed it was the man who gave me that tin box to deliver. The man was described as much tanned by the weather, wore whiskers, and was about fifty years of age."

"That must have been my father, though I never knew him to wear whiskers before. He is fifty-two years old. It must have been him

if he had those initials. I must go to him at once."

"I don't know whether you will be allowed to see your father to-night, as it is nearly dark now, but I will take you to the hospital if you wish to go."

"Oh, I must go and see if he's much hurt."

"All right. Put on your hat. By the way, I suppose that tin box I brought here belongs to your father, and contains much of value."

"Yes, yes, it does," said the girl, getting her hat.

"Then while the chance is ours we ought to search for it, and take it away," said Fred. "It is probably in the room occupied by Langley, and I guess that is on the second floor."

On their way down Fred opened the first door he came to on the second floor. It was one of the two front ones, and was furnished on a par with the room above, which had been occupied by Miss Wilson. About the only addition was an extra chair and a small trunk. As a pair of men's shoes stood in one corner, and an overcoat was hanging from a nail on the open door of a closet, Fred judged it was Langley's room. He looked into the room at the back, and saw evidences of woman's occupancy there which convinced him it was used by the woman of the house. There was no sign of the box anywhere about the front room, therefore the boy reasoned if it was still in the house it must be locked in the trunk. He stated his opinion to the others.

"The only way to find out whether it is in the trunk or not is to break the lock," he said.

"How are you going to do that?" asked Bennie. "Isn't that against the law, anyway?"

"I believe it is, but in a good cause, who cares for the law?" replied Fred.

"When the police search people's trunks they always get a search warrant first," said Bennie.

"I don't believe they always stand on that. It depends on circumstances."

"There isn't much danger that the fellow in the cellar would have us arrested for breaking into his trunk. We have charges to make against him, and so has this young lady, that would send him to Sing Sing in short order."

"I don't see that we have anything that would break the lock. I must go down to the kitchen and look for something," said Fred.

"Well, don't waste any time about it. That man Cordes might turn up before we can get away, and his appearance would complicate matters."

"He can't get in, for all the doors are locked. It's nearly dark now, so I'll light this lamp."

Fred struck a match and lighted it.

"I suppose I'll find a lamp in the kitchen," he said, as he turned to the door.

"I saw one on the shelf down there near the stove," said Bennie.

"All right. I'll find it. You entertain Miss Wilson till I get back."

Fred lost no time in returning to the kitchen, lighting the lamp he found on the shelf, and looking around for some implement with which to break the lock of the trunk. He found a hammer and a number of large wire nails. He also discovered an ice-pick.

Leaving the lamp turned low, he carried the things to the second-story room. With the ice-

pick and the hammer he soon demolished the lock of the trunk, and opened it. Hidden under a lot of clothes the tin box was found, and it showed no signs of having been tampered with. At any rate, it was as heavy as the night Fred carried it to the house.

"Do you recognize this box, Miss Wilson?" he asked.

"I never saw it before, but I am sure it belongs to my father, for his initials are on it," she answered.

Fred closed the trunk and shoved the hammer and pick under the cot.

"Now we'll get away from here as fast as we can," he said.

The light was blown out, and they descended toward the front door. As Fred was about to turn the key he heard steps outside. Then came the clang of the bell in the kitchen.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Tin Box.

The ring of the bell was a startling sound for the three as they stood there in the darkness of the hall. Who was the visitor? The same thought occurred to each. Only one person was likely to call at that house, and that was James Cordes, the girl's uncle, the head and front of the crooked business. Fred felt the girl grab his arm in a nervous way.

"What shall we do?" she whispered. "It must be my uncle."

"While he is waiting to be admitted in front we'll leave by the kitchen door," said Messenger 99. "Come."

The three at once hastened to the kitchen, but before they reached it the bell clanged again, this time three times, as if the visitor was impatient at the delay in admitting him. Fred and Bennie lifted Miss Wilson over the barricade of chairs, and while the latter went to the door the former blew out the lamp. The bell clanged once more, and rang loud enough to wake the dead.

"We have no time to lose," said Fred.

Bennie threw open the door and they stepped outside, closing the door behind them.

"We'll walk to the rear of the property, get over the fence, and make our way to the next street," said Fred.

They hurried in the direction indicated as fast as they could go. Barely had they got over the fence when Fred saw a shadow come around the corner of the house and go to the back door, on which he pounded loudly. The three waited and watched. The man soon discovered that the door was not secured, for he opened it and vanished inside.

"He'll fall over that barricade in the dark," said Fred. "When he learns the truth he'll be a wild man. Come on; we must hurry over to the elevated station. It's a long walk, and a lonesome one. You carry the box a while, Bennie."

Taking the girl by the arm, Fred led her over the vacant lot before them. The party did very little talking until they had put some distance between them and the house.

"There is little use of putting the police on the track of those people," said Fred. "By the

time we hunted up a police station and told our story, the birds will have flown. They'll expect that we will notify the authorities, and will make themselves scarce with as little delay as possible. The loss of the tin box will strike them hardest, for probably it contains money and other valuable property that they counted on getting away with."

"I shall never forget what I owe both of you boys," said Miss Wilson. "I shall be grateful to you as long as I live, and so will my father, when he learns what you did for me, and how you recovered his property from his rascally brother-in-law."

"We are very happy to have been of service to you, Miss Wilson," said Fred. "I hope we shall continue to be friends, as it would give us much pleasure to continue an acquaintance begun under such strenuous conditions."

"I shall always be your friend," she replied.

"It is after eight o'clock now. I feel sure that it would be a useless trip for you to go to the hospital to-night."

"But I am anxious to learn how my father is," said the girl.

"You can get all the information you want by telephoning."

"Well, I will do that, then."

"After you have attended to that where do you wish us to take you?"

"I have no place to go but the flat where I lived with my uncle."

"Do you think it would be safe for you to trust yourself there alone until your father leaves the hospital? Why not come to my home? My mother and sisters will gladly welcome you under the circumstances, and you can stay with us until your father comes for you."

"It is very kind of you to invite me. I will accept your offer if you really feel sure that your mother would have no objection to shelter me for a day or two."

"Don't you worry about that. As soon as I tell my folks the position you are in they'll welcome you all right."

It was a little after nine when they left the train at the nearest station on the Third avenue road to the boys' homes.

"We'll go into that restaurant across the street and have something to eat. Bennie and I haven't eaten since one o'clock, when we had our dinners. I suppose you had some supper, but I guess you can stand a little more," said Fred.

Miss Wilson wasn't very hungry, and was satisfied with a cup of tea and a boiled egg. The boys ordered quite a layout for themselves, and ate as if they were hungry. Fred paid the checks, and then they went to a drug-store and Fred telephoned the hospital.

He inquired as to the condition of the man entered there as T. V. W. He was informed that the patient was doing well and was out of danger. He had given his names as Thomas V. Wilson.

"Tell him in the morning that his daughter has just found out that he is in the hospital, and will call to see him to-morrow," concluded Fred.

Half an hour later Fred, with the tin box under his arm, walked into his flat and astonished his mother and sisters, who were somewhat worried because he had not been home to supper, by

introducing Miss Wilson to them. When he explained the girl's situation, Mrs. Hooper welcomed the fair stranger to the hospitality of her home, and promised to look after her for the time being. Fred's sister proceeded to make Miss Wilson feel at home. They took a great fancy to her, as she did to them, and the three were soon chatting together like old friends. Fred declared it was a pleasure to see how well they got on together. As for the tin box, he decided it would be safe in his trunk until Mr. Wilson was ready to take charge of it. Next morning the boys reported at the office as usual. They had agreed not to say anything about their adventure at the manor house to the other messengers.

Bennie asked about Miss Wilson, and Fred told him that his folks had cottoned right to her.

"She's a fine little girl, and as pretty as a picture," he said.

"Mashed on her?" grinned Bennie.

"Nonsense!" flushed Fred.

"Twenty-three," called out the operator at that moment.

"That's me," said Bennie to his friend, as he jumped up and went to the counter.

Half a minute after he was on the street. Fifteen minutes afterward Fred was sent out, too.

Messenger 99 was kept busy that day up to his quitting time, and then he and Bennie hustled home for their suppers. Agnes Wilson told him while he was eating that she had seen her father at the hospital, and found him getting on very nicely. He didn't know who had crept upon him and knocked him out in the fog. When his daughter told him her story about her uncle's treachery the matter was quite clear to him. Needless to say that his feelings toward his brother-in-law were not of a kindly nature. He determined to appeal to the authorities in order to have James Cordes arrested and punished.

"Father is very grateful to you for rescuing me and saving his tin box," continued Agnes. "He says he will reward you liberally for it, as the box contained a great deal of money and securities."

"No," replied Fred, shaking his head. "I don't want any reward. I consider that I only did my duty, and I guess my friend Bennie feels the same way."

"But you'll let my father show his gratitude some way, won't you? He won't be satisfied otherwise," said the girl.

"Oh, his thanks will be enough. You have already thanked me yourself. I am satisfied," replied Fred.

"I think you ought to let my father make you a present."

"I won't refuse a small token of his appreciation, but I'll not accept anything that looks like pay."

Agnes saw that her new friend was decided on that point, so she did not press the subject further, but she determined that she and her father would try and find some way of repaying the great obligation they were under to Fred.

Next day Mr. Wilson communicated with the police over the phone, and a detective was sent to the manor house. He found the house shut up and no signs of life about it. He managed to effect an entrance, and searched the house. The meager furniture used by the conspirators

was still there, but the two men and the woman had disappeared. On the evening of the following day when Fred got home from work he found Mr. Wilson at the house waiting to see him. Agnes introduced him to her father, and that gentleman thanked the boy very warmly for his valuable services to his daughter and himself.

The girl had told him that Fred would not accept any reward, and so Mr. Wilson said nothing about it. As he wanted to thank Bennie, too, Fred took him over to his friend's house and introduced him. When they got back he was prepared to take his daughter to their flat. Mr. Hooper, however, persuaded him to let Agnes remain with them till the next day. Fred handed him his tin box, and he went away with it. Two days afterward a small package was delivered to Mrs. Hooper. On opening it she found a handsome gold watch and chain for Fred, and valuable trinkets for herself and her daughters, with a note of kindly appreciation from Mr. Wilson, in which Agnes joined. An invitation was extended to Mrs. Hooper, her daughters and Fred to call at an early date at the Wilson flat, where the writer and his daughter would be pleased to welcome them as honored friends.

Fred was usually pleased with the invitation to call on the Wilsons, for he was greatly interested in Agnes. Bennie also received a valuable testimonial from the gentleman with a letter of thanks, and he felt that he had been amply repaid for the crack he had received on his head, and the brief imprisonment he had suffered in the cellar in common with Messenger 99.

CHAPTER IX.—Robbed.

Several uneventful days passed away, during which Fred, in common with Bennie and the other messengers, was always on the move. He was here, there, and everywhere within the radius of the district covered by the office to which he was attached. He was considered one of the best messengers in the service. At any rate, when any special service was required Messenger 99 was the one called on to attend to it if he happened to be in the office at the time. On Sunday evening, a week from the day he and Bennie had their adventure at the house in the Bronx, Fred and his two sisters made a visit to the Wilson flat, where they were expected, as the boy had sent Agnes a postal card saying he intended to call on that evening. They received a very cordial reception from Mr. Wilson and his daughter.

"Heard nothing about your brother-in-law and his accomplice, I suppose?" said Fred, after a while.

"Not a thing," replied the gentleman. "The police are of the opinion that they have left the city to avoid arrest."

"That is quite likely. They know what they are up against. You have been out West for two years, your daughter told me."

"Yes. I may go again shortly, but I shall take my daughter with me in that case, for it would not be safe to leave her alone in the city."

"She could come and live with us just as well as not. We would be glad to have her."

"Thank you for saying so; but I think I should prefer to take her with me."

"Are you interested in mining matters?"

"Yes. I have large interests at Paradise, Nevada. That is a big and prosperous mining camp a short distance from Goldfield."

"I guess there is a lot of money in the mining business," said Fred.

"There is if you get hold of the right kind of property, otherwise you are likely to sink your capital to no purpose."

"The mine you are interested in I should judge was the right kind."

"It has proved so. It has exceeded my anticipations so far, and I see no reason why results should not continue on the same scale."

"I would not mind owning a gold mine myself," laughed Fred.

"You are not the only one who craves such a thing. The mine I am connected with is a silver mine. The ore carries a small amount of gold, as well as other metals, but nothing to speak of. I have given my daughter 5,000 shares in our mine, which is called the Phoenix, as a nest egg for her future. Its market value at present is only 20 cents a share, so that makes her worth \$1,000, but I hope it will be worth a great deal more one of these days."

Mr. Wilson went into the next room and returned with a certificate made out in his own name for 1,000 shares.

"Allow me to present you with that as a nest egg for your future," he said.

"I'm afraid I ought not to accept so valuable a present as that," said Fred, rather doubtfully. "You have already given me the watch and chain."

"To tell the truth, the watch and chain was my daughter's present. This certificate is mine, with the hope that some day it will be worth its par value of a dollar a share," said the gentleman. "I'll send it out to our office in Goldfield and have it transferred to your name on the books of the company. You will get it back in the course of a couple of weeks."

Fred thanked him for his liberality, and then Agnes came over to talk with him. Fred and his sisters spent an enjoyable evening, and after inviting Mr. Wilson and Agnes to call on them soon, which they promised to do, left for home.

About the middle of the following week, along about six o'clock, a telephone message came into the office from an office on Grand street, requesting a messenger. Business houses that use messengers frequently are equipped with a small electric wall box, which indicates their wish for a messenger by the simple pulling down of a little handle. This saves time all around, as all patrons of the service are registered at the district branch office, and the moment a ring comes the operator at the office knows the name and address of the person or house asking for a messenger, and a boy is despatched without delay. Persons not provided with this equipment who want a messenger occasionally have to use the telephone.

That was the case in the present instance. The party who called from Grand street said he wanted a messenger who could be trusted with a valuable package. The operator called up Messenger 99, and sent him to the address indicated.

When he reached the place he found it was

a dealer in diamonds and jewelry. Rosenbaum was his name, and he looked hard at Fred when he came into the office.

"You are a good, honest messenger?" he said.

"That's my reputation, sir," said Fred.

"The company is responsible if you lose anything given to you, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; that is, to a certain extent."

"What do you mean by to a certain extent?"

"You might intrust me with a package worth only a dollar, and if I lost it you might make a claim for \$100. You wouldn't expect the company to settle at your valuation, would you?"

"This package I want you to take uptown is worth \$1,000," said Mr. Rosenbaum.

"Is it? Then you ought to take it yourself."

"It is not convenient for me to take it."

"Send it by express, then."

"It must be delivered right away."

"My company won't be responsible for such a package unless it has evidence of the value of its contents."

"I will show you. It is a box containing some diamond ornaments. You know diamonds when you see them?"

"I have no expert idea of their value."

"I will show you the bill you are to take with the package."

"You have a telephone. Better talk with the operator at our office. He'll tell you what the company's responsibility amounts to."

Mr. Rosenbaum adopted Fred's suggestion, and Messenger 99 awaited the result. In a short time Rosenbaum came back to the counter and told Fred it was all right. He showed him the ornaments and the bill, and wrapping the package up handed him both, telling him the name and address of the person to whom he had to deliver the package was on the envelope containing the bill.

Fred started for the Grand street elevated station. After the boy left the office a clerk in the place went to one of the two windows and looked out. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his face vigorously and then closed the window. On the opposite side of the street a man had been standing for some time. He seemed more interested in the windows of the diamond dealer's office than anything else. The appearance of the clerk at the window seemed to wake him up. He removed his gaze from the window to the door. When he saw Fred, in his messenger uniform, come out and walk westward, he left the spot and followed the boy. He might have been a detective employed to watch the messenger to his destination, or he might have had some other purpose in view. At any rate, he went up one of the elevated stairs while Fred went up the other, and both reached the platform at the same time.

The man followed Messenger 99 into the car and stayed there till the train got to the 116th street station, where Fred got off. The boy started west toward Lexington avenue, with the man close behind him. They were passing an alley leading to a cheap stable when the man suddenly cried out: "Boy, boy, help me!" and began to stagger. Fred turned around and looked at him.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm dizzy. I'm going to have a fit, I'm afraid. Lead me in here where I can sit down."

Fred was a boy always willing to do anyone a favor, so he grasped the man and supported him up the alley to the stable, where there was a chair in front of the door. The man dropped into the chair and closed his eyes.

"Can I do anything more for you?" asked Fred.

"Get me a drink of water, please. There is a sink inside the stable."

Fred looked in the dark and horsey-smelling shed, and saw the sink at one end, with a tin cup on a shelf. He walked over to get the water.

He had to pass under the edge of an open loft. As he did so a heavy bag fell on him, and carried him to the floor. Fortunately the blow was a glancing one, but even at that he was dazed by the shock. The man who had said he was ill seemed to have recovered in wonderfully quick time after asking for water for he followed the messenger in and was not far from him when he was struck down.

At the same moment a small, smooth-faced young man sprang down from the loft, and instead of grabbing the bag and lifting it off Fred's face he sat on it.

"Quick! Now's your chance," he said to the other.

The pretended sick man immediately started to go through Fred's pockets. Messenger 99, although half smothered, came to while the man was doing it, and realized what was going on. Before he could make a struggle the man found the package he was after, put it in his pocket and got up.

"All right," he said. "I've got it."

He hurried back to the chair and sat down.

Then the other chap rose and lifted the sack of feed off the boy.

"Sorry for you, young fellow. You got it good and hard that time," he said. "I didn't see you passin' underneath. I hope you ain't hurt."

Fred rose up without a word and staggered toward the door.

"Where's the water I asked you for?" asked the man in the chair.

Fred recognized his voice as that of the man who had robbed him. Like a flash he realized that the chap had only been shamming ill, and that a daring game had been pulled off on him.

He was sure that the smooth-faced man was this fellow's accomplice. How was he to recover his valuable package with two stout men to deal with?

This man on the chair had the plunder in his pocket, and if he accused him of the theft he'd deny it and the other man would come to his aid.

He could not successfully handle them both. There were few people passing along the street outside, for it was dusk, and he could expect no help in that direction.

Messenger 99 felt he was in a bad predicament, and he never thought quicker in his life. He had an idea that the two rascals counted on his going away without knowing he had been robbed.

Fred had no intention of going without making an effort to recover the stolen package. In the fraction of a minute he decided to resort to strategy, since force seemed out of the question.

"The water," he said. "Excuse me, I forgot

to bring it. A bag of feed fell on me and kind of dazed me. I'll get it for you now."

As he spoke he began to stagger a bit, and put his hand to his head. He saw the smooth-faced chap inside the door listening, and judged he had come there prepared for trouble. Fred walked a few steps in an uncertain way, and then sank down on a stool as if badly used up, with his face in his hands. Through his fingers he watched the actions of the two men who were looking at him. They consulted together in a low tone.

"Better let me help you to the drug-store on the corner," said the man who had faked illness.

He couldn't have made a suggestion that would have suited Fred better. It was clear the rascal had not the slightest suspicion that the boy had the least idea he had been robbed. Fred raised his head slowly and said he would be grateful to the man if he would take him there, for he felt very bad.

"Come on, then," said the man, taking him by the arm.

Fred got up with seeming difficulty, and leaned heavily on the fellow.

"I'll be right back," the thief said to his accomplice.

"All right," said the smooth-faced chap.

Fred walked as well as he dared, and together he and the rascal passed down the alley to the street, and then down the sidewalk to the corner. The boy's heart gave a great jump of satisfaction when he saw a policeman standing there. The officer looked at them.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked the thief.

"Nothing," cried Messenger 99, before his conductor could answer, straightening up and grabbing the man with both hands. "Arrest this man, officer. He has just robbed me."

CHAPTER X.—In Which Messenger 99 Turns the Trick.

The rascal was taken completely by surprise and stared blankly at the boy. As for the policeman, he probably had the idea that the young messenger was making game of him. At any rate he made no effort to molest the thief.

"Officer, this man got me into a stable up the street and took a valuable package out of my pocket a few minutes ago," said Fred, earnestly. "I want him arrested."

The rascal now woke up to his danger, and saw that the messenger had tricked him. The first thing he did was to make an effort to shake Fred off, but the boy clung to him like a leech.

"Are you going to arrest this man, officer?" asked Messenger 99.

"Well, hardly, for I guess you don't know what you're talking about," replied the policeman.

"Search him and you'll find the package on him," persisted Fred.

The officer wasn't searching men on the street and said as much in a curt tone.

"The boy is crazy," said the thief, putting on a bold front. At that moment another policeman came up. Fred's action in clinging to the fellow who had robbed him began to attract at-

tention and people stopped and looked to see what was in the wind.

"Look here, young fellow, let that man go," said the first officer.

"Not much. He's a thief. I was carrying a package of jewelry to a lady in Madison avenue when this fellow, under pretense of being ill, got me to help him up an alley to a chair near a stable door. Then he asked me to get him some water to drink, telling me there was a sink in the stable. I went in to get the water and was knocked down by a pal of his, who dumped a bag of feed on top of me. While I was down this chap went through my clothes."

"It's a lie," said the thief, making another attempt to break away.

"No you don't," said Fred, clinging to him. "If you won't arrest him, officer, take us both to the station, and have the matter settled there. I am charging him with theft. I am an A. D. T. messenger, as you can see by my cap. I've got the bill for the stolen package in my pocket to prove my words."

The matter began to look serious to the officer, and when the other policeman advised him to take boy and man to the station he decided to do it. The thief put up a strenuous objection to going to the station.

"It's an outrage," he said. "That boy is a faker."

"So much the worse for him if he can't prove his charge at the station. He will be locked up, and you can appear against him tomorrow," said the policeman.

"But I've got an engagement. I can't go to the station," protested the thief.

"That's all rot, officer. He wants to get away, for he knows that the goods will be found on him if he's searched," said Fred.

"You've got to come," said the policeman, who was beginning to believe there was truth in the messenger's story.

The thief, finding that he was in for it, got desperate and put up a big struggle to free himself from Fred's grasp. Had he succeeded it would have done him no good for the policeman grasped him by the arm, his suspicions aroused by the man's anxiety to get away, and the party, followed by an increasing crowd, started for the police station. They arrived there in ten minutes and the officer, Fred and the man were lined up before the desk. The policeman stated the facts of the case.

"Do you charge this man with theft?" asked the sergeant, looking at Fred.

"I do."

"What has he stolen from you?"

"A small package of diamond jewelry, worth I was told \$1,000. Here is the bill, with the lady's name and address where I was taking it," replied Fred.

"What have you got to say to the charge?" said the sergeant, turning to the man.

"The charge is false," he replied, doggedly.

"Have him searched and see if it is," said the boy.

The policeman was directed to search the thief. He found the package in the fellow's pocket, and laid it on the desk. The sergeant compared the name and address on it with the bill and found

that they tallied. The conclusion he reached was that the young messenger was right.

"The evidence seems to be against you. I'll have to lock you up. What is your name?" said the sergeant of the prisoner.

The man refused to give either his name or address so the officer at the desk wrote "John Doe" in the blotter. Other questions were put to him, some of which he answered. Fred's name and address were taken down, and as the thief was led away to a cell, Messenger 99 was told to appear at the police court next morning to testify against the prisoner. The police kept the box of jewelry to produce against the rascal, so all Fred could do was to call on the lady and report what had happened. She was prosperous and Fred's story put her in a great predicament.

She was preparing to attend some important social function that evening and wanted the diamonds to wear. There was no chance of her getting them, however, and so she blamed the boy for allowing himself to be robbed, threatening to report him to the company. Messenger 99 didn't think he deserved the call-down.

"Most any one would have been fooled by the game that chap worked on me," he protested. "He worked his scheme so naturally that I never suspected anything. I think I deserve some credit for recovering the package."

The lady would not be placated because she was disappointed. She declared she would countermand the order for the jewelry, as she had made the purchase particularly for the occasion. That didn't worry Fred any, as he was not interested in the sale. He went to a public telephone station and communicated the facts to the operator at the office. He was told to go home and that his statement in full would be taken in the morning. So home he went and told his folks at the supper table of his adventure. His mother and sisters showed much concern at his story.

"I tricked the rascal in good shape, didn't I, mother?" he said, complacently. "It was a game of tit for tat, and he got the short end of it. He laughs best who laughs last, and that's me."

Next morning he made a full report of the matter at the office, and was afterward excused from duty so that he could appear against the thief. In the meantime Mr. Rosenbaum had read the story in his morning newspaper, and he was in no pleasing frame of mind when Fred called on him on his way to court, for his customer had notified him already that the purchases was off. He called Messenger 99 down for getting robbed, but had no words of commendation for the clever way the boy had outwitted the thief and recovered the plunder. He decided to accompany Fred to court and appear against the man, and at the same time put in his claim for his property.

A detective had gone around to the stable and arrested the smooth-faced chap. This fellow declared that he knew nothing about the robbery of the messenger, and swore he had not seen the thief go through the boy's clothes. Fred swore that the fellow had held him down while he was being robbed, so both men were held for the Grand Jury. They were subsequently tried, found guilty and sent to Sing Sing. That event, however, did not happen until a couple of months later, and in the meanwhile they were kept in the Tombs as they could not get bail.

The Wilsons read about Fred's adventure in the papers, and Agnes and her father called on the Hoopers to learn further particulars of the case. Fred told them all the circumstances that had escaped the press, and they both agreed that Messenger 99 was a wide awake boy who couldn't be easily downed. Bennie declared that his chum took the cake.

"Not one messenger in a hundred could have turned the trick on those rascals like you did," he said. "It shows that you keep your wits at work when you're in a hole. Rosenbaum never would have seen his property again if you hadn't outwitted those crooks. I wonder how they knew you had that package in your clothes?"

"That's what puzzles me," replied Fred. "They didn't take another thing from me, though they could have scooped the two dollars I had in my pocket."

"You didn't notice any man following you from Grand street, did you?"

"Of course not. If I had I should have been on my guard, and the trick that caught me would probably have failed."

"Well, it looks queer," said Bennie. "You must have been followed from the diamond man's place by the chap who pretended to be ill. Then the fact that his pal was up in the loft ready to drop the bag of feed on you would show that the scheme was a regularly arranged one and not got up on the spur of the moment."

"I never thought of that," said Fred, reflectively. "Perhaps those rascals had a confederate in Rosenbaum's office?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if they did have, was Bennie's final comment.

CHAPTER XI.—Catching A Thief.

Whether the crooks had an accomplice in Rosenbaum's office or not never developed, for Fred did not care about bringing the suggestion to the diamond dealer's attention, after the rather disagreeable way that person had acted toward him when he called on him on his way to court.

One day not long after this affair Messenger 99 was sent to a business house on Duane street. The office he was bound for was on the top floor, and being an old-fashioned building was not provided with a passenger elevator.

"Gee! Have I got to walk up four flights?" he muttered, not relishing that kind of exercise.

He found there was a freight elevator, which was used by some of the tenants' employes to ride on, and decided to take it.

The elevator platform, which had no sides to it, was up at the top floor when he leaned over the chain and looked up. He pushed the button to notify the man that somebody was below who wanted the elevator, but from the sounds that came down he saw that the platform was being either loaded or unloaded with freight, consequently he would have to wait. As he couldn't tell how long he would have to await the convenience of the elevator man, and waiting was not in the line of his duty, he was obliged to take to the stairs.

He had reached the third landing when a door flew open on that floor and a man rushed out,

evidently in a great hurry. At the same moment Fred heard a girl cry "Stop thief!" The boy was so close to the door that the man butted into him, and both went on the floor in a heap.

"Blame you!" roared the fellow with an imprecation, as he hastily scrambled up.

Before he could continue his flight a stout young woman rushed out of the office and caught hold of him.

"Give up that money you stole," she cried.

The man turned on her and tried to push her away. She had a good hold on him, however, and he couldn't shake her off.

"Hang you, you will have it, eh?" he cried, striking her a blow in the face that sent her reeling back into the office.

By that time Fred was on his feet, and satisfied from what he had seen and heard that the man was guilty of some crooked business, he laid hold of him as he started to make for the stairs.

"Let go of me, hang you!" roared the chap, trying to strike the young messenger.

"Not much. What did you hit that young woman for, you coward?"

"What's that to you? Let go of me or I'll knock the daylight out of you," replied the chap, raising his fist again.

Fred ducked and at the same time released his grip and struck the fellow a blow in the stomach. The man doubled up with a howl of pain and rage. The woman rushed forward again and caught him. He seized her and swung her around against Fred, knocking the boy against the wall, and seeing he could not reach the stairs going down he threw the girl's grip off and ran up to the next floor. Fred dashed by the young woman and followed him. The fellow ran to the end of the hall and disappeared. Messenger 99 chased after him, reaching the place where he had vanished, to find that it was a sort of alcove occupied by a ladder communicating with the roof. The man's legs were going through the open scuttle when Fred made a spring for the ladder. The rascal looked down, saw his pursuer, slammed the scuttle down and stood on it. That was the only way he could hold it down, as there was no means of locking it from the outside. When Messenger 99 tried to push up the scuttle he found he couldn't.

He guessed that the fugitive was standing or sitting on it. That was the only way he could hold it down, as there was no means of locking it from the outside. At any rate his pursuit of the fellow was blocked. Putting his shoulder against it, and exerting all his strength, he succeeded in lifting it an inch, but that was the best he could do, so he desisted. At that moment the young woman, looking considerably the worse for her encounter with the fellow, appeared at the opening of the alcove. Fred turned and saw her.

"Has he gone on the roof?" she asked, in an excited tone.

"Yes, and he's holding down the scuttle so I can't open it," replied the boy. "What has he done?"

"Stolen fifty dollars from our office."

"Return to your office and telephone for a couple of policemen."

"He may get away before they come," she said.

"He can't move without releasing the scuttle, and if he does then I'll be up after him."

The young woman ran away to follow Fred's suggestion. The boy tried the scuttle again, but the weight was still on it.

"I'm losing time, but I can't help it," thought Messenger 99. "It's in a good cause. It's my duty to catch this fellow, if I can, or at least prevent him from getting away before the cops reach the building."

Just then he heard the scuttle creak. It struck him that the thief had stepped quietly off and started to make tracks. Pushing against the scuttle it went up easily and fell back on its hinges with a bang. Fred stuck his head up and received a heavy blow that nearly broke his jaw. He fell back several steps, half dazed. The rascal who had served him this trick slammed the cover on again, and then started to make his escape over the roofs, thinking he had pretty well settled his pursuer. Fred, however, quickly recovered from the first effects of the blow, and he felt mighty mad over his unexpected discomfiture.

"If I could reach him I'd give him a good stiff pounding for that lick he handed me," he muttered.

He pushed against the scuttle again expecting to meet with resistance, as before, but it went up easily enough. Fred, however, was cautious this time. The fellow might be lying back waiting to repeat the former clout. He stuck his cap on his fist and raised it slowly up. Nothing happened so he ventured to shove his head up quickly. The fugitive was not in the vicinity of the scuttle. Fred caught sight of him four roofs away, trying a scuttle there. He failed to get it open and rushed over on the fifth roof. Messenger 99 clambered out on the roof and made a dash for the chap. The thief saw him coming, and finding the fifth scuttle was locked continued his flight.

Fred sprang over the intervening fire walls as easily as a fawn might have done, and rapidly overtook the rascal. The chase continued nearly to the corner where a taller building blocked the man's further progress in that direction. There was a line of windows, however, in the tall building, and the fugitive springing on the firewall reached for and grabbed the ledge of one of them. He might have got up there if he had had plenty of time at his disposal, but under the circumstances he had no show with Fred so close behind him. Messenger 99 jumped on the fire wall and seized one of his swinging legs. Throwing his weight on it the man lost his grip on the window ledge and tumbled to the roof with Fred clinging to him.

The fall half stunned the rascal, and the boy took advantage of the fact to jump astride of his back and pin him down with his face against the asphaltum. The thief struggled furiously to unseat his young captor, but Fred was able to defeat his best efforts. Finally the fellow quit his struggles through exhaustion.

"Do you give up?" asked Fred, prodding him in the ribs with his thumb.

"I say do you give up? You might as well for I've got you dead to rights, and there'll be a policeman up here soon to take charge of you," said the boy.

"I'll give you ten dollars if you'll let me go."

"No, you won't. Ten dollars won't bribe me," replied Messenger 99.

"Twenty, then."

"No; nor twenty thousand. What do you take me for?"

"A fool if you refuse the money. What good will it do you to have me pulled in?"

"A whole lot of good. It will give me satisfaction for that thump you gave me in the jaw when I was in no position to defend myself. That shows what a coward you are. It was just like hitting a man from behind his back."

"Twenty plunks will pay you for that."

"No, it won't. You stole fifty dollars from an office on the third floor, and you've got the money in your pocket now. It's grand larceny, and you'll go to the State prison as sure as your name is Mud at this moment."

"I'll divide, even up with you," said the chap, desperately.

"I told you I'm not to be bribed. Here come two cops now on the scuttle."

The officers looked around and saw Fred crouching down. They could not see the man they were after on account of the intervening fire walls. Fred waved them over with his arm. They came and soon saw that the messenger was holding a man down on the roof. They judged he was the thief before the boy announced the fact. In a few moments the crook was handcuffed and marched back to the scuttle. He was taken down to the office to be identified by the woman book-keeper. Fred didn't follow, but entered the office on the top floor.

"It's taken you a long time to get here," said the man sourly.

"I was in the building half an hour ago, sir."

"You didn't come in here," said the man.

"No, sir; I was helping to catch a thief."

"Catch a thief! What do you mean?"

Messenger 99 told all the particulars of his chase of the crook to and over the roofs, and that he finally nailed his man and held him till the policemen came.

"You're a clever and nervy chap," said the man, "so I won't say anything more about the time it took to reach me. Here, take this package up to the address that's marked on it."

"All right, sir. Sign the ticket and put the time on it. I'll make my explanation to the operator when I get back."

The man did so, and then Fred took the package and left.

CHAPTER XII.—The Revolutionary Mansion.

On his way downstairs Fred stopped at the office where the theft had been committed and found that the crook had been carried to the station. The proprietor had returned and both he and the young woman thanked the boy for catching the thief. The gentleman offered Fred a \$10 bill, and he accepted it as a sort of salve for the blow he received on the jaw. Then he went on to deliver his package. When he got back to the office he explained the cause of the length of time he had taken on his errand, and the operator made a note of it. Bennie was sitting on the bench and Fred gave him an account of his adventure.

"The crooks seem to have a hard nut to crack in you," said Bennie. "That is the third jolt

you've given them in a month. As a thief catcher you take the persimmon."

"Just my luck to run against them, that's all," replied Fred.

"Say, what will we do with ourselves on Thursday?"

"On Thursday——"

"It's Decoration Day, you know, and a holiday for us."

"I haven't figured out anything yet."

"Time you did if we're going anywhere."

"Oh, there are lots of places to go—Coney Island, the ball grounds, South Beach——"

"Cut 'em out. I don't want to go where the crowd goes. What's the matter with a good long bicycle ride? Say down in New Jersey. Go as far as we feel like, eat our dinner at some country hotel and then ride back by train."

Fred thought Bennie's proposition pretty good, but before he could express his opinion the operator called out "23," and Bennie had to break away. That evening on their way home the boys decided on the bicycle trip, and after an early breakfast at a restaurant they started to ride to the Twenty-third street ferry. Boarding the boat they reached the Jersey side in due time, and having a road book to guide them they found no difficulty in going in the direction they wanted to take.

The boys kept as near the coast line as the roads would permit to catch the sea breeze, and the only drawback to their trip was the number of automobiles they met, or which passed them, compelling them at times to seek the side of the turnpike to avoid the dust, or a possible collision. About noon they had ridden a considerable distance, and as they were feeling hungry they consulted their guide-book for an inn at which they could eat and take a rest. They found they would have to ride to a certain village before they would strike a country hotel, and that was a few miles ahead.

Dismounting they entered the inn to see how they would fare. They were informed that a meal would be prepared for them at a cost of seventy-five cents each, so they registered, and then took their wheels around to a room where such articles were kept for the time being. They sat on the porch and talked until they were called into the dining-room. There was a timetable in the inn, and they made a note of the train service to Jersey City, and then asked the proprietor if there was anything to see in that neighborhood.

"That's a matter of taste," the man replied. "If you take the road toward the shore you will find an old Revolutionary mansion on the south side. It's close to a creek, and an engagement was fought there between the British and the Americans. The latter had a kind of redoubt on the creek, and kept a supply of stores there. The English heard about it and sent an expedition from New York to wipe the patriots out, and destroy, or take possession of, the stores. It was a hot fight I've heard. The Americans occupied the mansion as a sort of fortress. In the end the British were licked and had to retreat."

"Who lives in the mansion now?" asked Bennie, much interested.

"Nobody. They say it's haunted," replied the innkeeper.

"Haunted!" exclaimed Fred. "Gee! I never saw a real haunted house. Let's go there, Bennie?"

"I'm with you. How far will we have to ride to reach the mansion," he said to the hotel man.

"It's about five miles from here, but the road is very fair. You ought to make that in half an hour on your wheels."

The boys decided to make the trip and started off down the road in the direction of the coast. They came in sight of the old mansion inside of half an hour. A lane ran around to the rear of it near the creek, and they followed that. They saw scattered mounds of earth here and there on the bank near the water and wondered if these were the remains of the American redoubt. These mounds were overgrown with rank grass, and everything about the place looked deserted and gone to seed. The creek was wide enough to float the flatboats that probably brought the British troops to the neighborhood, and the boys pictured the fight in their mind's eye.

"This place hasn't improved much in over a hundred years," said Bennie. "I dare say if any of the chaps who fought here that day could revisit it they would readily recognize the old landmark."

"But if they could revisit New York how their eyes would bulge at the sight of the modern skyscrapers, the elevated railroad, and the size of the city, eh?" said Fred.

"Bet your life. They'd think Aladdin's Lamp had been working overtime. Shall we try to get into the house?"

"Aren't you afraid of ghosts?" laughed Fred.

"No, there aren't any such things."

"How do you know that?"

"I don't know, but I don't believe there are."

They put up their wheels and walked over to the hoary-looking building, which, having been constructed of stone, was still solid and substantial. They found the back door slightly ajar, and took the liberty of walking in.

"Some tramps have been here lately," said Fred, looking into what had once been the dining-room.

There were two big bunches of straw against one of the walls that looked as if they had been used for beds. A box, covered with a newspaper, showed it had been lately employed as a table, for there were crumbs of bread and cheese on it, a bottle with a partly burned candle in it, a couple of tin cups, and a well used pack of cards. There were also several cigar butts lying around on the dusty floor, amid streaks of dried nicotine.

"Tramps evidently have little fear of spooks," said Fred.

They walked around the rest of the floor, but there was nothing to attract their notice. Then they went to the floor above, and found only bare rooms. They continued up to the top floor, which presented no features of particular interest. Looking out of an upper window Fred saw two men coming up the lane. Each had a small bundle done up in paper under his arm. They were walking slowly as if time was a matter of no consequence to them. Fred pointed them out to Bennie.

"I wonder if they're coming here?" he said.

"Hardly," replied Fred. "Unless they're the chaps who have been making a free lodging-house

of this mansion. They hardly look like regular tramps."

"Well, let's go down and get out. I've seen enough of this house."

So down they went. When they reached the kitchen once more Fred glanced out of one of the windows. The two men they had seen were approaching the house, and were only a short distance away. Fred gave a gasp.

"Here, Bennie, see who's coming here," he cried.

Bennie looked, and recognized one of the men as Martin Langley.

CHAPTER XIII.—In Hiding.

"Good gracious, Fred, what shall we do? If that man catches us in here there'll be something doing."

"I'll bet there will, for if I'm not mistaken the other chap is James Cordes, Mr. Wilson's brother-in-law. They've got it in for us good and hard for spoiling their scheme, and will have little mercy on us if they should catch us in this out-of-the-way place where we could expect no help."

"We must get out through one of the front windows while they are coming in at the back. Once we get astride of our wheels——"

"They're too close at hand for us to do anything that makes a noise. They will doubtless go into that room there where they are putting up for the present. We'll take off our shoes, watch our chance and creep out the back way when they get to talking."

The boys removed their shoes and retreated to the vacant room opposite the one that showed signs of occupancy, and closing the door almost to, waited anxiously for luck to turn in their favor. In a few moments Langley and his companion, who was Jim Cordes, came in and proceeded straight to the room they had taken possession of as temporary quarters. Unfortunately for the two boys they left the door leading off the small hall open so that Fred, who was peeking out through the crack, saw they could not escape without being seen. The two men, placing their bundles on the box, opened them and took out a number of small packages containing food, together with two flat pint bottles of whiskey. The food they left untouched for the present, laying it aside. They seated themselves on either side of the box with their liquor flasks, and Langley, taking up the pack of cards, began to shuffle them, after which he dealt out hands to Cordes and himself.

"There is no use talking," said Cordes, "I shan't be satisfied till I get my hands on some of Wilson's coin, and the only way to do it is to kidnap that girl again and hold her for ransom."

"And I won't be satisfied until I get square with Messenger 99 and his friend who queered our game and scooped the plunder we had already secured," said Langley.

"I've got it in for them as much as you, Langley, but we must work one thing at a time. If we can find our way to Wilson's pocketbook I won't worry about the boys. Revenge is sweet, I know, but the boodle is more satisfying."

"That's all right; but if you'd been trapped in a wine bin, and kept there for hours in the dark, you'd feel like I do—dead sore on those kids."

"They are pretty clever chaps to turn the trick on you and the old woman. But let us leave them out of our calculations for the present. Let us figure on corraling the money. The New York police have probably given up hunting for us by this time. They are satisfied we have left the city, and they have not the slightest clue to our present whereabouts. I think I may venture back there to put my plan into execution."

"What is your plan?"

"To hire a night-hawk cab—I know a chap who can be depended on—and get the vehicle up to the block near the Wilson flat some afternoon when Wilson is away attending to business in Wall street. The cabman will ring the bell and hand a note to my niece from a supposed broker down town telling her that her father has been taken very ill in his office and wants to see her. She will be greatly alarmed and will get into the cab to be taken down town to her father. The cabbie will drive down town, but at a certain street he will stop and I will get into the vehicle and drug the girl with a handkerchief scented with chloroform. We will then take her to the house in Jersey City where your woman is living at present and place her in her care. That part of the business I leave to you to arrange beforehand, so that there will be no slip up. As soon as the girl is in our hands I will begin negotiations for her return on payment of say \$10,000. Wilson can easily afford that amount, and would give every cent he owns, for that matter, to get his daughter back."

"Your scheme is all right if it can be worked," said Langley.

"Oh, it can be worked all right, don't worry about that. I'll attend to the more important part, and you can fix things with the old woman for looking after the girl as soon as we have secured her. I'll look to you to hold the girl safe after I have kidnaped her, and while I am carrying on the negotiations for her return."

"I guess I can do that all right."

"Of course you can, with the help of the old woman. We can count on her, of course, as long as you are interested."

"Yes; she's my right bower when I need her help."

"That's what I thought."

"When are you goin' to put this new scheme into operation?"

"Right away. Money is getting low with us. I'll have to pay the cabman fifty dollars at least to induce him to take the risk of a daylight abduction. He's a nervy chap, however, and will take chances to gather in a bunch of bills. This won't be the first shady trick he's been connected with by a long chalk. He makes a paying business of driving intoxicated persons home and going through their clothes en route. He's got a good fat bank account laid away against a rainy day."

"He'll need it to pay a smart lawyer to get off if he ever gets caught. He's been doing crooked business for years to my knowledge and hasn't got into the hands of the cops yet."

"Perhaps he's payin' for protection."

"Well, that has nothing to do with us. I'll cross the river to-morrow and call on him. As soon as I've arranged matters with him I'll start the ball rolling. You must see the old woman in the mean-

time and fix things with her so there will be no hitch at the last moment."

"I'll go to Jersey City with you, and while you are attending to the cabman I'll call on Moll and tell her about our new scheme. As soon as the girl's old man comes down with the duffickers we must start out West at once—the three of us—for it will hardly be healthy for us to stay in this State."

"Of course we won't remain in this State after we have pulled the job off. We will hike to fresh fields and pastures new, there to enjoy the fruits of our enterprise. It's your deal, Langley."

Fred and Bennie easily overheard every word that was spoken by the men in the other room.

"What a pair of rascals they are," whispered Messenger 99.

Bennie squeezed Fred's arm, as much as to say that he fully agreed with him.

"If these men don't make a move we won't be able to connect with any train," said Bennie.

"It's a long time yet to the last train," said Fred.

At that moment Langley, who sat facing the door, got up and went to the window.

"Now's our chance," whispered Bennie.

"You go first and I'll follow if he doesn't turn around," said Fred.

Bennie sneaked out of the door, tiptoed to the kitchen door in his stocking feet and got outside safely. Fred was about to follow when Langley turned around suddenly and caught sight of him. With an exclamation of surprise and then an imprecation he made a rush at the boy. Seeing that he was discovered Fred made a dash for the kitchen, but in his haste he darted into the wrong room. Discovering his mistake too late to rectify the blunder he rushed over to a wide old-fashioned fire-place where he saw several loose bricks lying inside. His purpose was to use them to protect himself. As he reached for the nearest to fling at Langley who was entering the door, the bottom of the fireplace suddenly gave way and he sank out of sight like a stage demon in a spectacular drama.

CHAPTER XIV.—The Luck of Messenger 99.

Langley stopped and stared in astonishment at the hole through which the boy had fallen so unexpectedly. He had not recognized Fred, and merely supposed he was some lad of the neighborhood. Of the presence of Bennie outside he was ignorant. While he was looking at the hole he was joined by Cordes.

"What started you in such a hurry?" asked Cordes.

"Why, a boy who was hiding in the room opposite where we were talking. He must have overheard all we said."

"The dickens! Where did he go? What are you staring at that hole for?"

"He's down in that hole."

"The boy is?"

"Yes. He ran into that fireplace for some reason. The bottom fell out of it and he went down with it."

"Why where in thunder did all that brickwork go to?" cried Langley.

"There must be a double wall to the cellar,"

said Cordes, "and the bricks and the boy have tumbled between the two."

That seemed to be the only explanation of the strange occurrence.

"We'll have to get a rope, and one of us will have to go down into the hole and help the boy out, or he will die there, for he probably won't be able to get out himself," said Langley.

"If he's heard our talk about abducting the girl we'd better let him remain where he is. He'd be sure to blab, and that would spoil all our plans," said Cordes. "We have no interest in him anyway. He's a stranger to us, and we didn't cause him to fall into that hole. If he should die there we'll not be responsible for his death."

"All right. Let him stay where he is," said Langley.

They returned to the room above, looked down into the hole again, shouted and got no response, and coming to the conclusion that the boy had been knocked out, returned to the room they occupied, and resumed their card game.

When Fred felt the bottom of the fireplace give way under his feet, and realized he was falling into a dark void below, he uttered a cry of consternation. The bricks first landed on a hard floor with a rattle and Messenger 99 fetched up standing on top of them. He was quite shaken up by his descent, and his stocking feet were somewhat bruised by the bricks, but otherwise he was not hurt. His shoes dropped out of his hand and lay a few feet away. After he had recovered himself he looked up and saw Langley and Cordes looking down. When the latter flashed the match into the hole he supposed they saw him, but their talk convinced him that they had not.

He heard them go away and then distinguished their steps on the cellar stairs. Striking a match he looked for his shoes, and seeing them, put them on. The flash of the match had shown him that he was in a space between two walls. After resuming his shoes Fred began to consider how he was to get out of his peculiar predicament. It was clear to him that he couldn't get back through the hole, as the walls were perfectly smooth, and the hole lay apparently fully fifteen feet above his head.

"I'll have to depend on Bennie coming to my rescue, I'm afraid," he thought. "He can't do that very well while those two men are around, so I'm likely to remain down here some time. In the meanwhile I'll see where this passage leads to. It must have been built for some purpose, and maybe I may find a way out at the other end."

Lighting another match he started to explore the subterranean corridor. It went on for about a dozen feet and then turned sharply to the left. There it ended in a nook three feet deep. There were several shelves in this alcove, and they were loaded, to the boy's astonishment, with plates, bowls, and other articles of solid silver. A handsome looking box, with the key in it, stood on another shelf. There were other attractive looking boxes, made of rare woods, and ornamented with silver clasps and bands on the same shelf. On the floor three pair of silver candelabra, with wax candles standing in the sockets. There was also a small heavy brass-bound chest near them, with the key in its lock.

He lighted three of the candles, and then proceeded to look into the chest. It was full of more

articles of silver, hastily thrown in, and on one side were several bags that looked to be full of money. Fred opened one of them and found it was stuffed with English sovereigns.

"Why, there's a fortune down here. It must have been hidden by the owners at the time of the Revolution," he said. "Probably when the British made their attack. Something must have happened afterward to the people who put it here, otherwise they would have recovered it. Evidently the present owner of the property has no idea of its existence or he would have taken possession of it. Gee! This is a great discovery for me. There's money enough here alone to make me rich; but how will I get all this stuff away? Have I any right to it? It really belongs to the heirs of the original owners, that is if they left any heirs. If not it belongs to me by right of discovery. Maybe not. The owner of the property, even if he isn't an heir, could legally claim it, I guess. Well, what's the matter with me buying the property through my mother, and then his claim will become my claim as the new owner. I could buy it with a part of the money in this chest. There is a sign on the wall showing that the place is for sale, and I guess it can be got cheap. This house could be fixed up and furnished, and it would make a fine residence for us. Or it could be fixed up all around and put on the market at a much bigger price than it will fetch in its present dismantled condition."

After figuring on the matter a while Fred looked into the small boxes on the shelves and found them filled with valuable jewelry and ornaments, studded with diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones. He spent more than an hour down there, and then he heard the voice of Bennie calling to him through the hole in the fireplace. Taking the biggest jewelry box under his arm, and filling his pockets with sovereigns, he returned to the hole.

"Hello, Bennie," he said.

"How did you get in there?"

"I fell in."

"Fell in. I thought maybe you jumped down to get away from those men."

"No. I'll tell you about it when I get out. You'll have to get a rope. By the way, where are those rascals?"

"Gone away."

"There's a rope in that outhouse where we left our wheels. Go get it and help me out."

Bennie hastened away and soon returned with it. Fred fastened the box to the rope and then climbed up himself. Next they pulled up the box and hid the rope in the bushes, after which they mounted their wheels and started for the town to catch a train for Jersey City. That night Fred had a wonderful story to tell his mother and sisters, and they were amazed at his lucky discovery. They made their plans before they went to bed. Next morning Messenger 99 did not appear at the office, and Bennie wondered why his chum stayed away. Fred went to Wall street and changed the sovereigns he had brought from the old mansion into \$1,200 in American money. Then he and his mother visited the man in Jersey City who had the property for sale, and a contract was executed for its purchase at a bargain figure, Fred paying down \$1,000 on account.

That night he visited the Wilsons and told the

father of Agnes where his brother-in-law and Langley were hiding, and about the new scheme to abduct the girl. Next day he, Mr. Wilson and two detectives went down to the old mansion in an auto and surprised the two rascals asleep. They were locked in the county jail. Subsequently they were tried for abducting Agnes and were sent to the State prison. Before leaving the house Fred secured the back door. Thirty days later Mrs. Hooper took title to the property, and then Fred felt that all the treasure in the house belonged to him, for he had learned that the original owners had left no heirs to contest his right to it. Fred had everything secretly removed to a safe deposit vault in New York. The sum total of the money realized amounted to something over \$100,000, and he still had left the silver candelabra, one valuable silver dinner service, and many valuable articles of jewelry.

He had the old house repaired thoroughly, the grounds put in fine shape, and the house furnished, as his mother and sisters decided that they would like to live there. He told the facts to the Wilsons, on their promise of secrecy, and so when Mr. Wilson went West again, Agnes went to stay with the Hoopers. Two years later she married Fred and became the mistress of the Revolutionary house on his coming of age. Fred became a sort of gentlemanly farmer, and was looked upon as the nabob of that particular locality, but the people who lived in that vicinity never learned the secret of his good fortune. And so we draw a curtain upon this narrative of the luck of Messenger 99.

Next issue will contain "HAPPY-GO-LUCKY JACK; OR, THE BOY WHO FOOLED THE WALL STREET BROKERS."

KING OF AFGHANISTAN IS WELCOMED BY BERLIN

Republican Germany got her first spectacle of regal pomp since the World War recently upon the arrival of Amanullah Khan, King of Afghanistan, and his party which came into Berlin with military precision.

The private car bearing the King and Queen stopped exactly alongside a red carpet in Lehrter Station where President von Hindenburg stood rigidly erect to greet the royal visitors. Premier Braun of the State of Prussia and President Loebe of the Reichstag gave the Emir a hearty handshake while most of the other members of the welcoming party contented themselves with bowing low.

The members of the Afghan Party were in sharp contrast with their German welcomers, all of whom were in black coats and top hats with the exception of Gen. Heye of the Reichswehr. As Amanullah emerged from the station, the afghan Colony in Berlin, mostly students, let out a yell in their native language which the King answered with a salute.

President von Hindenburg and the King then took the salute of a Reichswehr company and entered open automobiles which drove through curious crowds to Albrecht Palace where various diplomatic officials greeted him.

SELLING STOCK IN EXPEDITION TO DIG UP \$60,000,000 HOARD

A treasure of gold, silver and diamonds valued at \$60,000,000 buried in Bolivia is the subject of the prospectus of a new company floated in London recently with a capital of \$125,000 which will finance an expedition to retrieve the hoard.

An expedition of eighteen Englishmen, including mining and mechanical engineers, with all necessary equipment, is sailing for Bolivia in March, says the prospectus circulated in the city. The party will be under direction of Dr. Edgar Sanders, a mining engineer. He thinks the work will be completed in October.

The treasure is said to be buried in a hillside on Gaichani Ranch on the Sacambaya River near Inquisivi in the Province of La Paz. Sanders has leased the ranch for three years. One-fourth of the find will go to the owner of the ranch and the rest to the company financing the expedition. The company is called the Sacambaya Exploration Company and the prospectus stresses the point that is a speculation, not investment.

The story of the treasure begins when Bolivia belonged to Spain and was called Upper Peru. Jesuits used to work the gold mines there with Indian slaves until about 1778, when they were ordered deported by the Spanish Government.

For eleven years previously Spain had prevented the Jesuits exporting any of their treasure to Europe, but the order continued to work the gold and silver mines and a diamond wash during that time.

They accumulated the \$60,000,000 worth of which the expedition will seek and hid it in secret chambers dug in the hill opposite the site of their monastery whose ruins are still on Gaichani Ranch. Silver mines in the vicinity are still worked.

One of the deported Jesuits, Father Gregorio San Roman, had a brother who was Prefect of Callao, Peru. On his way out of the country Father Gregorio told the Prefect where the treasure was buried. The Prefect left documents telling the secret to his son, who later became President of Peru. He in turn left them to his daughter, Donna Carina, who gave a copy to Cecil Herbert Progers, an Englishman, said to be well known in South America.

Progers believed the documents were genuine and dug on the site mentioned. He found a silver crucifix and then a wooden box containing a parchment warning any searchers for the buried treasure that they would meet a terrible death if they persisted.

The native workmen saw this warning and promptly abandoned Progers.



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TRUTHFUL JAMES

or

The Boy Who Would Not Drink

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER V.—(Continued).

"I know that very well, and I'm not going to undertake it; but in this particular case I'm not sure that I would be doing wrong in denouncing the whole thing, as it ought to be, a lie from the whole cloth. If I ever have the pleasure of meeting Sally Holmes again, I shall do what I think is a manly thing, bow to her and beg her pardon for the trouble that has been caused."

"Yes, that would be all right, and I would be glad to hear of your having done so, Jimmy."

A few days later Jimmy met Sally Holmes accompanied by another young lady, and she met him with great cordiality, rushing up to him and saying:

"Oh, Mr. Watson, I'm so glad to see you," and they shook hands warmly.

Jimmy blushed in spite of himself and said:

Miss Sally, I thank you from the depths of my heart for this manifestation of your friendship. I assure you that I appreciate it to the fullest extent. I want to say to you that there is no young lady in the whole town whose friendship I appreciate as I do yours," and to Sally's great satisfaction he bent over and kissed the back of her hand.

She blushed and exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Watson!" And Jimmy said:

"Please accept it as a token of my appreciation for your kindness."

"Thank you. I can assure you that I admire your manliness in that unpleasant dispute."

"Oh, thank you. You lift a great load off of my heart."

"Mr. Watson, are you engaged for next Tuesday evening?"

"No, I am not," he replied. "What's up?"

"Why, there is to be a dance at Mrs. Bradbury's house on that evening. Is it possible for me to give you a hint without giving offense?"

"Certainly; certainly. And I will take the hint and ask you at once for the pleasure of your company at the dance."

Both Sally and her girl friend laughed heartily at the promptness with which he took the hint, and Sally said:

"I will be glad to have your escort, Jimmy."

"Oh, my!" laughed the other girl. "I never heard you call him Jimmy before. It has always been Mr. Watson," and she looked at them both inquiringly.

"Oh, that's all right," said Jimmy. "I hope she will never call me by any other name, and nobody has any right to object to it if I don't."

"Now, Jimmy," said Sally in great good humor, "understand that to you I shall be Sally from this time forth."

"Thank you. I assure you that the permission is highly appreciated."

"Now, Jimmy, remember, too, that you and my

brother must be fast friends from this time forth."

"That's all right. We have shaken hands and are the best of friends now. I assure you that I have no desire to have another quarrel with him, for he is a manly fellow and a hard hitter, and you must know that hard hitters who have pretty sisters have very few acquaintances who care to pick a quarrel with them."

The story was told that Jimmy had cut out Henry Halstead, as far as Sally Holmes was concerned, as he had engaged her company to attend the dance at the home of Mrs. Bradbury, and that set all the gossips in the community to talking, and they wondered really what had become of her former sweetheart, for she had been looked upon for weeks and months as being engaged to Henry.

"Well," said a neighbor, "I don't blame her for throwing Henry over, for he got her name mixed up in a most unpleasant bit of gossip; but who in the world would have ever thought that she would have done so?"

"I don't blame her, either," said another. "But whoever would have thought that she would have had the spunk to acknowledge that she had lied for Halstead's sake? She must have been dead in love with him at the time."

"Why, goodness gracious," said the other, "everybody knows that Sally Holmes was in love with Henry Halstead, and she was never a girl to keep the fact concealed."

The party at the home of the Bradburys was a very successful one, and all the young people in the neighborhood were gathered there; but a more astonished set than they were, when they saw Sally Holmes come in, escorted by Truthful James, was never seen in the town before. Hardly half of them had heard that Jimmy and young Holmes had made friends, still less had they heard of the reconciliation that had taken place between Sally and Jimmy.

Many of Sally's friends hustled her off into another room and overwhelmed her with questions as to how it came about.

"Oh," said Sally, "Jimmy is a good fellow. He is honest and truthful, as we all know. In fact, he and I had never quarreled personally."

"Well, how about your former beau, to whom you were supposed to be engaged?" one of the girls asked.

"Oh, he was the cause of the whole trouble, and is mad yet; but, so far as I am concerned, he can stay mad."

"Well, well, well!" ejaculated one of the girls. "Now, mark what I say, all of you, Jimmy and Sally's former beau will be sure to have a fight."

Quick as a flash Sally spoke up and remarked:

"Well, if they do Jimmy will be sure to win, and for one will be glad of it. Henry Halstead talks too much, anyway."

CHAPTER VI.

The Conspiracy Against Truthful James.

By some means or other young Halstead, Sally Holmes's former sweetheart, heard that she was going to attend the Bradbury dance with Jimmy Watson, hence he failed to put in an appearance

at the entertainment that evening, and of course everybody present noticed his absence, so comments about the affair were universal.

Not only that night, but for several days afterward, friends of both parties asked questions; but all that Sally would say in answer to the questions about it was that Jimmy had offered her his services as escort, and, having no other at the time, she accepted them.

"But how about Henry, Sally?" one of her friends asked.

"Well, Henry didn't offer to take me to the dance, so that explains it."

"But, Sally," the friend went on, "what in the world was the matter? Everybody is talking about it. Have you and Henry had a falling-out?"

"No. I guess he is mad, though, because some of my friends had been blaming him as the cause of the trouble, saying that he was responsible for the whole affair. Some old men and a few old ladies charged him with having induced me to tell a falsehood, and then some of them told him that when I explained, I blamed him for asking me to say what I did. That is the plain truth, too."

"Well," said the other girl, "I really think myself that he did wrong, for I hardly think that he had any right to put your friendship for him to such a test."

"Neither do I," said Sally, "and my confession was positively true."

"Sally," said the other, "be candid with me now and acknowledge that you still love Henry."

"Well, I thought I did," was the reply, "but every time I think of what he persuaded me to do I feel like scratching his eyes out, for a man who would persuade a girl to tell an untruth wouldn't hesitate to do the same thing himself, and I hate a liar, above all things. I never thought about it at the time, but now, when I do think over it, I feel disgusted with both myself and Henry. Jimmy was particularly nice to me the evening of the dance, and the more I talked with him the better I liked him. One cannot help but respect a truthful man, and everybody knows that Jimmy Watson is truthful in all things."

"Yes, of course," replied Sally's friend, "and it is a mighty good reputation for a young man to have."

"Look here," said Sally, "I notice that you and Frank Hill got off into a corner that evening and seemed to be very much interested in what each of you was whispering to the other. Now, you tell the truth. You be candid with me. Did you believe everything he told you?"

"No, I didn't," said the other. "He tried to make me believe some things that I really wish were true; but then, we won't say anything about that, Sally."

"No, of course not. He's a mighty good chap, and I would like nothing better than to hear that he had really proposed in earnest."

"Sally, will you promise me not to repeat it if I tell you something?"

"Yes; I won't say a word about it," replied Sally.

"Well, he did propose and asked me to marry him next Christmas; but he made an impression on my mind that he was simply flirting and wasn't telling the truth. You know he was en-

gaged to another girl last year, and the girl caught him making love to one of her friends inside of two months afterward, and, being spunky, she got mad and threw him over, so you see that I couldn't really believe what he was saying to me."

"No, of course not."

"Last spring he began paying me a great many compliments through other parties with the expectation that they would come straight to me and repeat them, as they did, every one of them, and in return I gave him some left-handed compliments, which of course went straight back to him. You know how it is with the girls. There is nothing they delight so much in as repeating compliments of that kind, so he soon learned that I was not infatuated with him. He sent me flowers and candies several times. I accepted them and distributed them among my friends, telling each one to whom I was indebted for them."

"Oh, my! Hasn't he ever called upon you at your home?"

"No; he sent notes asking permission to call, but I always pleaded previous engagements. Only once did I grant him permission to call, and that was when I had three girl friends in the house."

"Among them was the one to whom he had made such desperate love," she added. "He was the worst broken-up young man you ever saw in your life, and, Sally, suppose Henry should send you a note asking permission to call on you, what would you do?"

"I would simply return the note unanswered."

"Would you, indeed?"

"Certainly. I can get as mad as he can, and I would be really glad to let him know it."

"Sally, his father is a rich farmer."

"Oh, I know all about his family. I know, too, how that property will be distributed, and I think more of the man than I do of the land. I don't want a husband who runs on his good looks or his wealth. Besides, I'm in no hurry to get married, anyway. I'm young yet, and I would rather marry a young man whom everybody in the country respects for his honesty and manhood than to be the wife of the richest man in the town."

"So would I," said the other, "for look at Josie Burt. She married the son of the richest man in this end of the county last year, and now she is about the most miserable girl that I know of. Her husband neglects her, and rarely speaks a kind word to her."

"Yes," assented Sally, "I look for her to run away from him or to hear daily of his having thrashed her, for she has a most ungovernable temper, you know, and though she is his wife, he is mean enough to give her a good thrashing. When she gives him provocation enough, he is liable to do anything."

One day, when an invitation to attend a corn-husking at the farm of a well-known farmer who had two beautiful daughters as well as two muscular sons, who intimated to the young fellows that there would be plenty of good whisky on hand in a private jug, was received, Henry Halstead suggested that then would be a good chance to force Truthful James to drink even against his consent.

One young man offered to bet ten dollars against ten cents that they couldn't do it.

(To be continued)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 1928

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

DEBTS FOR SCHOOLS RISING

The Department of Commerce, announcing the result of a survey, declared recently that the per capita payments for school operation and maintenance, including interest on debt incurred for school purposes, in 250 cities having a population of over 30,000, rose from \$6.30 in 1916 to \$15.57 in 1926.

For the 250 cities the funded or fixed debt incurred for general purpose amounted to \$3,371,956,520, and that for schools amounted to \$982,362,688, or a per capita of \$23.48, the school debt representing 29.1 per cent. of the total debt.

SENTENCED AS KILLER OF MAN WHO DIDN'T DIE

A man has just been released from jail here who was serving a sentence for a killing that never occurred.

Ben McCarthy, a mountaineer, obtained his freedom under a writ of habeas corpus. According to the judgment under which he was serving, he was sentenced to one year in the penitentiary for manslaughter. The person who was shot, however, recovered from the wound, apparently without knowledge of the officials. Therefore, McCarthy was in the position of serving a sentence growing out of the death of a person who had never died.

It is believed nothing further will be done to punish McCarthy for the shooting, officials believing he has suffered enough.

VERNON-COLE WINS AGAIN

"Constanza," by Willis Vernon-Cole, an American, who, a year ago, left Greenwich Village and retired to a chateau at Sinq Mars le Pile, France, was declared recently the winner of the 1928 award of the Writers' Guild, this consisting of a cash prize and assurance of publication.

This is the second time the guild's annual award has been won by Mr. Vernon-Cole. He is the first writer to be so honored since the guild

was formed for the purpose of "stimulating a more intelligent interest in the literary and dramatic value of historical romance and fostering and financing the publication of the works of American authors."

"The Star of the Alamo" won the guild award for Mr. Vernon-Cole in 1926. It was an historical romance based upon the archives of old Mexico and woven from personalities and events which resulted in the United States winning Texas, California and all the great Southwest.

Before sailing a year ago with his bride, the former Senorita Maria Estela Jiminez, Mr. Vernon-Cole announced that he proposed to obtain official permission to delve into the archives of Sicily in search of material for "Constanza," a romance that presents realistically personalities whose lives are woven into the mediaeval history of the island.

CALL TO WOMEN VOTERS

Woman's challenge to vote is now "more insistent though less clamorous than in 1920," Miss Belle Sherwin declared recently in calling, as President, the annual convention of the National League of Women Voters to meet in Chicago, April 23 to 28.

"Eight years ago," she says, "women throughout the United States were entitled to vote for the first time. At that juncture the League of Women Voters was formed with the immediate object of equipping women to cast an informed and conscientious vote.

"The political education of women has in the intervening years deepened the meaning, the opportunities and obligations of their suffrage. The challenge to vote responsibly is more insistent today though less clamorous, than in 1920."

PORTO RICAN "LIBERTY" PLEA PROVOKES A PROTEST

The "message from the people of Porto Rico to the people of the United States" asking for "freedom," which was handed to Col. Charles A. Lindbergh by the Porto Rican Legislature at a special session in his honor recently had a reverberation to-day.

Three trustees of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico called on Gov. Towner for an explanation and history of the message, their visit being prompted by a cable from Field Workum, a New York attorney, offering his resignation as a trustee of the institute and as Chairman of its Finance Committee.

Mr. Workum's cable, which was sent to Dr. J. W. Harris, President of the Polytechnic Institute, said:

"Read message to Lindbergh, American influence being resented, tender my resignation as trustee and Chairman Finance Committee. Will use best efforts withdraw American financial influence. Continuing enthusiastic support of you personally."

The trustees who called on Gov. Towner were Mrs. Roswell Miller of New York, Chief Justice Deltoro and Dr. Harris.

The Governor was reported to have said he had not read the resolution and that he had not known about it in advance. He said he would call on President Bargello of the Senate and Speaker Toussoto of the House for their interpretation of the wording and meaning of the resolution.

Was He Mad?

"The vagaries of a diseased mind are oftentimes wonderful. I am more and more impressed with the belief that insanity is a disease which grows on people. From a small incident, or from a period of shock, insanity takes its start. Thus it was with Hugh Somers. Had he been surrounded with pleasant influences, had his mind been drawn off that horrible affair, he would have remained of sound mind, and his life would not have been placed in jeopardy. Was he mad? was the great question in the trial."

I read this indorsement on the back of one of my uncle's manuscript, and lighting a fresh cigar, drew the argand light nearer to my elbow, placed my feet on my desk at nearly a level with my head, opened the manuscripts, and soon everything else was forgotten in the interest I felt in the solution of the query—"Was he mad?"

Captain Somers was descended from a proud and wealthy old family, and lived in elegant style at his country seat, known for miles around as Breeze Lawn. The captain's wife had been dead many years and the family consisted of the captain and Hugh and the servants. There was another son, John Somers, older than Hugh, who had brought disgrace on the good old family name, and had been disinherited by his father.

Captain Somers had driven him sternly forth, blaming the hour of his birth. Once Captain Somers made up his mind there was no such thing as relenting. Yet, stern though he was, he had a heart tender as a woman's where Hugh was concerned, for on him he lavished his whole affection, which was returned by Hugh with interest.

At Breeze Lawn everything moved along smoothly, happily, without jar or turmoil, until one night a servant, returning from the nearby village about nine o'clock, stumbled over the body of a man stretched across the path.

His cries of alarm drew others from the house. A light was procured, and their horror may be imagined when they made the discovery that it was the body of their master, cold in death.

For a few hours the sight of Hugh's grief was fearful to look upon, and then he became calm and silent to a degree which was melancholy.

The murder was the usual nine days' wonder, and then it began to be gradually forgotten.

Hugh became more and more reserved as months rolled away, until finally he never spoke at all, save when irritated by one of the servants, whom he would discharge on the spot, and who would not be replaced.

And then a strange story began to float around. It was to the effect that the house was haunted.

Some treated the story with scorn, but were convinced when at night they saw a figure in white glide about the grounds or saw it appear and disappear at once of the windows.

This continued for several months, and then one day the village people were startled by the news that on the night before May Turner had disappeared from her father's house.

Had any one seen her? This was the anxious query of the distressed father of every one he met.

At last an old farmer who knew May stated that he had seen her in the neighborhood of Breeze Lawn about ten o'clock the night before. It had been moonlight, and he was sure it was her. In fact, he had spoken to her, but she had hurried on as if desirous of not being known.

To Breeze Lawn the anguished father hurried with some neighbors.

The hall door was open and they entered the house. Turning into one of the parlors, it was to be riven with anguish at the sight of his daughter stretched on the floor, dead.

The story of the ghost was explained. The devoted girl had come to Breeze Lawn night after night to bring food to the man she loved, to comfort him as well as she could. She had come silently, like a shadow, and had gone in the same way, and Hugh never once had seen her until the night before.

They found him in another part of the house. They took him in beside her body, but he evinced no emotion, no horror at the sight.

"Who is she?" he asked.

But they thought him shamming.

Hugh was arrested, taken to jail, and placed on trial for murder.

It was then that I came upon the scene, being summoned as an expert in insanity, to state my belief as to Hugh's mental condition.

Others differed from me. I said he was mad, others that he was sane. That he had struck down May Turner none doubted, but the trial resolved itself into—not whether he committed the murder, but—was he mad?

Mad he was finally decided to be, through my exertions, and therefore not accountable for his actions. It was settled that he was to be taken to an insane asylum; in short, to the one I had charge of.

During the trial he had not said a word—"ay—yes—or no"—although I had observed that he watched me closely. It was after the trial was finished that he surprised me by voluntarily opening a conversation with me.

"You think I am mad?" he asked.

"A little unsettled in mind by your troubles," I answered.

"Wrong!" he exclaimed. "But I dare not speak for his sake."

"For whose sake?" I inquired, opening my eyes. Was somebody back of this? Somebody whom Hugh's supposed insanity was protecting?

He did not speak to me again for several hours, and then his eyes suddenly flashed as he blurted out:

"He must be punished!"

"He? Who?"

Again no reply.

An hour later he as suddenly and unexpectedly spoke again.

"There was a will!"

"Left by your father, you mean."

"Yes."

"What of it?"

"It has not been found!"

"Well?"

"It must be!"

"Why?"

"Never mind," and he shook his head knowingly, a cunning expression in his eyes, such as is never seen in those of a sane man.

"Are you afraid of me?"

"No; why?" I asked.

"Because all the others seem to be," he answered. "They say you are going to take me away."

"Yes."

"Do you mind spending one night with me in Breeze Lawn?"

"No; do you wish it?"

"Yes."

I pondered deeply before I replied. I was responsible now for his keeping. Was there too much risk in acceding to his desire? Curiosity finally decided me, and I made him happy by telling him that we would spend the night at his place.

It was considerably after dark when we got there. The night air was raw and chilly, and I put on my light overcoat and kept it on even indoors, for the house was damp from being so long shut up.

I inquired where there was a lamp, and was startled by his peculiar laugh.

"I've smashed them all," he said. "No lamps for me! No, no! I want it all dark when he comes! A light might frighten him away."

I, however, would not think of spending the night with him in utter darkness, for, though not afraid of him, I knew not what vagary might cross his mind.

At last I struck something which would answer nearly as well as the lamp. It was a torch of pitch pine.

Hugh made no resistance when I lighted it, and I did not offer to stop him when he went about carefully screening the windows and stopping up the cracks of the doors, so that the rays of light should not be seen beyond the room.

It was near the hour of midnight when I observed him suddenly pause, and then pricking his ears, bend his head to listen.

"He's coming!" exclaimed Hugh, in an intense whisper.

Presently I could make out the sound of light footfalls. They drew nearer, their destination appearing to be the very room we were in.

Hugh glanced at me, then about the apartment, then darted away and stretched himself on the floor where he would be concealed by a large roll of carpet.

Hardly had quietness settled down when I heard a hand touch the door-knob.

It was slowly turned, and then the door was opened by a tall, thin-faced man, wearing a high hat. He started as if in alarm at sight of the light and myself.

"Who are you?" he hoarsely asked, as he reached the table, placing his hands on which he bent forward and looked me keenly in the face.

"Who are you?" I demanded of him.

"I am John Somers, the outcast!" he replied in a bitter tone.

"And your purpose here? Is it to look for your father's will?" I said.

"It is," he admitted. "I have had an awful life," he said, pathetically; "I have nearly starved a score of times. If that will is never found, I have an interest here. I have, anyway, if what they say of my brother is true. Is he really mad?"

Before I could answer, John Somers received his reply from another, and that other was his brother Hugh.

"No!" thundered Hugh, suddenly arising from his concealment and bounding forward.

Never shall I forget John's look of terror and surprise as he turned and faced his mad brother.

As soon as he could move he recoiled and threw up his arms defensively. With a wild howl Hugh snatched up the flaming torch, and the next instant brought it down on John's head, from which the hat had been jerked by his sudden movement.

The torch struck with a sickening thud, and then all was enveloped in darkness.

I sprang to my feet to interfere, but the darkness prevented, and I could only helplessly stand and listen to the awful conflict then in progress.

I could do nothing, though I was harrowed to the soul by the sounds of the awful struggle going on within so few feet of me.

It did not last long. In less than three minutes the last sound had ceased, and an awful silence had settled down.

I struck a match and saw that both were lying silent on the floor. Having lighted the torch, I found that John Somers had fallen a victim to the fury of the madman, who lay unconscious beside the man he had killed.

When he recovered consciousness I hurried him away from Breeze Lawn. A year's residence at the asylum, during which time he was kept employed in work which interested him, and his mind therefore kept off the terrible past, and I was able to pronounce him cured.

His first sane question was regarding May Turner.

I told him she was dead. He asked no more, and I did not tell him how she had died. He asked to see her grave, and I accompanied him to it. He bent and kissed the mound over her loved form, and then turning to me:

"You may think all the dark past is forgotten. You are wrong. You have tried to conceal from me the knowledge that I have been in an insane asylum, but I know it perfectly well. My mind was diseased, of that I am equally aware. To you are my thanks due for restoring me, the methods of which restoration I now understand. But the fever is still in my blood; I did not kill May! What would you advise me to do?"

"Sell Breeze Lawn and remain away from objects which serve to bring back the past."

He followed my advice. Years afterward he returned from abroad, perfectly sound in mind.

LOCK UP 100 PERCENTERS, LADY ASTOR'S ADVICE

Viscountess Astor, extolling Abraham Lincoln at a birthday luncheon recently, discussed Anglo-American relations and assailed the "100 per cent citizen" as a menace to international amity.

"I think 100 per cent citizens ought to be locked up," she said. "They are a danger to the world."

"America, said the native Virginian, "is very young, very large very rich and 'very, very bumptious,' adding, "I do not blame it. When England was very rich, she was very bumptious."

GOOD READING

INNOCULATED RABBITS LOOSE

All the forces the Prefecture of Police could spare were scouring Paris recently for twelve rabbits and three ducks stolen from the garden of Dr. Charles Richet, eminent pathologist. The rabbits and ducks had been infected with grave diseases as an experiment a few days ago.

NEW YORK ANGLER LANDS SEVEN-FOOT SAILFISH

Harry W. Johnson of New York recently caught the largest sailfish landed off the coast here this winter. The fish weighed seventy-six pounds and measured 7 feet 2 inches from nose to tail. It required one hour and fifteen minutes of battling to land the fish. Mr. Johnson, who is on his honeymoon here, announced that he would have the fish stuffed and would present it to his bride for a dining-room ornament.

"And I'll present it right back to him," remarked the blushing bride. "The horrid thing will look better as a trophy in his den than it will in our dining-room."

The bridegroom looked hurt.

WIDOW SUES MAN IN HOTEL DEAL

Mrs. Carrie Archambault, widow of Frank A. Archambault, hotel and restaurant man who died in 1914, filed suit in Supreme Court recently against Robert D. Blackman, her husband's secretary, for the return of a lease on the Belleclaire Hotel, 77th Street and Brodaway, and on twenty lots in Flushing, Queens.

She alleges that when she inherited the properties from her husband she was told by Mr. Blackman that the hotel was losing money. At his pressing instance she gave leases to a corporation in which he was concerned. In 1924, she said, she learned that the hotel had not been insolvent, but had made profits steadily and therefore wishes the leases revoked on the ground of misrepresentation.

INCOME TAX PUZZLES BRIEFLY MADE PLAIN

Income tax returns are required of every single person whose net income for the taxable year 1927 was \$1,500 or more; every married person, living with husband or wife, whose net income was \$3,500 or more, and every person, single or married, whose gross income was \$5,000 or more, regardless of net income.

Gross income, as defined by Treasury regulations, "includes in general, compensation for personal and professional services, profits from sales and dealings in property, interest, rent, dividends and gains, profits and income derived from any source whatever, unless exempt from tax by law."

Net income, upon which the tax is assessed, is gross income less certain specified deductions for business expenses, losses, bad debts, taxes, contribution, etc.

"PHANTOM SNIPER" SHOOTS TWICE

The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth instances of shooting by the Camden, N. J., "phantom sniper," who has terrorized motorists for a fort-

night, shooting holes through their windshields, were reported recently by police.

This time the sniper's target was the glass protector of a fire-alarm box at Kaighn Avenue and Hyde Park. An hour after the punctured glass had been replaced it was hit again by a bullet. A mounted policeman was nearby and heard the tinkling of glass. He searched for the bullet, but, as in previous cases of shooting by the sniper, no bullet could be found.

Patrolmen searched the neighborhood for the marksman without finding a clue. The only time the police have thought they had seen the "phantom" in the flesh was last Friday when two men in a Chrysler roadster were believed to have fired the bullets which shattered a motorist's windshield. The roadster was pursued twelve miles but eluded capture.

TESLA ANNOUNCES HE'S INVENTED TINY PLANE THAT RISES VERTICALLY

Nikola Tesla, inventor and electrical wizard, has entered the field of aviation and believes he has solved the problem of making the man in the street a "man in the sky" cheaply and with perfect safety. He says he has invented a "flivver" flying machine which can be sold for "much less" than \$1,000, will weigh only 500 pounds, can rise vertically, travel forward at high speed and be landed, if necessary, "through an open window."

The window, Mr. Tesla, who is nearing seventy-two, hastened to explain, must be "at least eight feet wide" because his two-man "air flivver" will be eight feet long, eight feet wide and eight feet high. Two United States patents, it was learned through Munn & Co., patent attorneys, of No. 24 West 40th Street, have just been issued on the device, which Mr. Tesla calls a "helicopter-airplane," although the original application was made more than seven years ago.

Mr. Tesla said he had not built a full-sized machine for trial and probably would not until he had arranged to have it produced in quantity. He declared that "in forty-five years I have never designed an apparatus that did not do what I said it would," and that years of careful experiment and mathematical calculation had shown him the helicopter-airplane was sound.

Essentially, the device consists of a turbine motor, which the inventor-electrician says is capable of developing tremendous power for short periods, a pair of wings, the necessary body and framework and a propeller. The latter is designed to lift the helicopter-airplane and its passengers to any desired height, the wings being in a vertical plane. For forward flight the machine merely is tipped through 90 degrees and the wings become supporting surfaces, the motor operating then at normal power.

Mr. Tesla said the first thing he ever invented was a flying machine devised when he was a freshman in college in 1876. Recently, he said, this device had been built and flown in France.

CURRENT NEWS

POPE PIUS DISAPPROVES OF D'ANNUNZIO'S WRITINGS

Writing of Gabriel d'Annunzio, poet and soldier, especially his doctrine of the superman, are strongly disapproved of by Pope Pius. The Pontiff did not mention the author by name but by referring to the launching of a de luxe edition of the poet's works and his published philosophy he made the object of his disapproval unmistakable.

U. S. HUSBANDS FACE FAMINE IF TIN SUPPLY RUNS OUT, LORD ASKWITH SAYS

A picture of hundreds of thousands of American husbands facing famine if anything happens to America's tin supplies was painted in London recently by Lord Askwith, tin magnate, in a speech before the Royal Colonial Institute.

"The United States," he said, "is effectually sealing itself up in a tin can. Half the food Americans eat is tinned. Americans are so busy and so imprisoned in their tinned lives that they never pause to consider what would happen if the tin supply ran out and they had to fall back again on ordinary food.

"It has been estimated that if anything happened to America's tin supplies about 25 per cent of American husbands would go hungry, for the simple reason that tinned food has robbed American women of their culinary art."

Lord Askwith also said that 50 per cent of the world's tin is used in the United States.

THREE L. I. COUNTIES PUT 244 MILLION IN BUILDINGS

More than 30,000 new dwellings, stores, factories and miscellaneous structures were erected at a cost of \$244,000,000 last year in Suffolk, Nassau and Queens, not counting Long Island City and Astoria, according to the twenty-third annual survey of the Long Island Railroad, made public recently.

Dwellings totalled 19,557 and the railroad estimates that on a basis of five occupants to a dwelling, the population jumped almost 100,000 during the year.

It is interesting to point out the rapid growth that invariably follows substitution of electric train service for steam operation," the survey states.

"One hundred or more buildings were erected in each of these communities in Queens:

Queens Village, 3,300; Jamaica, 1,720; Hollis, 1,018; Richmond Hill, 900; Rosedale, 866; Fresh Pond, 756; Glendale, 642; Springfield Gardens, 630; Bayside, 326; Flushing, 286; Whitestone, 285; Morris Park, 272; Higbie avenue, 58; Far Rockaway, 80; Woodhaven section, 200; Howard Beach, 174; Little Neck, 17; Woodside, 160; Aqueduct, 141; Murray Hill (Flushing), 129; College Point, 127; Laurelton, 110; Winfield, 110; and Douglaston, 108.

DREISER SEES SOVIET AS WORLD MISSIONARY

Theodore Dreiser, novelist, returned recently aboard the Hamburg-American liner *Hambura*.

having spent eleven weeks in Russia, where he went to study the manners and methods of the Soviet regime.

His studies have convinced him that the fundamental principles of Sovietism as he found them, are destined to exert a vast change in the social and economic status of the entire world. America itself, he believes, will sooner or later adopt these principles in some form.

In Russia he was accepted as the emissary of American letters, he reported. Stalin, now head of the Soviet Government, placed two secretaries at his disposal, who traveled with Mr. and Mrs. Dreiser from one end of Russia to the other.

While he found the Bolshevik program satisfactory as far as it applies to the general mass of humanity, in that all are guaranteed food, shelter and clothing, he was distinctly opposed to what he regards as an overemphasis placed upon labor.

"In this emphasis of the importance of the laborer," he pointed out, "over the man who created the idea by which the laborer worked, or the men who sold it in the form of merchandise, the present Soviet program is lacking."

Mr. Dreiser also reported he was very much interested in the fact that there is no private property in Russia. Stalin, head of the Government, he said, lives in a three-room apartment, renting at \$125 a month, which is paid for by the Government.

MORE AND YOUNGER MEN DRINKING THAN EVER BEFORE, SAYS PHELPS PHELPS

Until modification of the Prohibition law is achieved "hip flasks, wild parties and 'necking' will continue to be the chief amusements of the boys and girls of America," in the opinion of Phelps Phelps, Republican of New York.

Phelps who is the author of the Referendum Bill under which the voters of New York State expressed their opinion on Prohibition in 1926, in an interview recently asserted that Prohibition is responsible for a large increase in the percentage of women who drink, and that it has an adverse effect on young girls.

"A generation ago nice women did not drink, as least never in public," the Assemblyman said, "but today if you go to places where they serve drinks with meals, you see women of standing enjoying the forbidden liquids. They know they are violating the law of the land, but they regard it as a joke. I think any observer who is fair will admit that the percentage of drinking among women is on the increase.

"But the greatest evil of the present situation is the effect it has upon the girls under age. In the old days they never drank, nor did they approve of young men who did. The old rhyme which went 'Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine' has been revised to read: 'If you haven't got a flask, you needn't come around.'

"Nowadays young girls start drinking in a spirit of bravado, and at an age when they are unable to control themselves."

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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